









# THE HOLY QUR-ĀN :

ARABIC TEXT WITH AN ENGLISH  
TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY

BY

'ABDULLĀH YŪSUF 'ALĪ



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94. They will present their excuses  
To you when ye return  
To them. Say thou: "Present  
No excuses: we shall not  
Believe you: God hath already  
Informed us of the true state  
Of matters concerning you:  
It is your actions that God  
And His Apostle will observe:  
In the end will ye  
Be brought back to Him  
Who knoweth what is hidden  
And what is open:  
Then will He show you  
The truth of all  
That ye did."

٩٣- يَخْتَدِرُونَ إِلَيْكُمْ إِذَا رَجَعْتُمْ إِلَيْهِمْ  
قُلْ لَا تَعْتَذِرُوا لَنْ تُؤْمِنَ لَكُمْ  
قَدْ نَبَّأَنَا اللَّهُ مِنْ أَخْبَارِكُمْ  
وَسَيَرَى اللَّهُ عَمَلَكُمْ وَرَسُولُهُ  
ثُمَّ تَرْدُونَ  
إِلَىٰ عَلَيْهِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ  
فَيُنْشِئُكُمْ  
بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ○

95. They will swear to you by God,  
When ye return to them,  
That ye may leave them alone.  
So leave them alone:  
For they are an abomination,  
And Hell is their dwelling-place,—  
A fitting recompense  
For the (evil) that they did.

٩٥- سَيَخْلِفُونَ بِاللَّهِ لَكُمْ إِذَا انْقَلَبْتُمْ  
إِلَيْهِمْ لِتُعْرِضُوا عَنْهُمْ فَأَعْرِضُوا عَنْهُمْ  
إِنَّهُمْ رِجْسٌ وَمَا دُونُ جَهَنَّمَ  
جَزَاءٌ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ ○

96. They will swear unto you,  
That ye may be pleased with them.  
But if ye are pleased with them,  
God is not pleased  
With those who disobey.

٩٦- يَخْلِفُونَ لَكُمْ لِتَرْضَوْا عَنْهُمْ فَإِنْ  
تَرْضَوْا عَنْهُمْ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَرْضَىٰ عَنِ  
الْقَوْمِ الْفَاسِقِينَ ○

97. The Arabs of the desert  
Are the worst in unbelief  
And hypocrisy, and most fitted  
To be in ignorance  
Of the command which God  
Hath sent down to His Apostle:  
But God is All-Knowing,  
All-Wise.

٩٧- الْأَعْرَابُ أَشَدُّ كُفْرًا  
وَرِفَاقًا وَاجْدِرْ أَلَّا يَعْلَمُوا حُدُودَ  
مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ رَسُولِهِ  
وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ○

98. Some of the desert Arabs  
Look upon their payments <sup>1346</sup>

٩٨- وَمِنْ الْأَعْرَابِ مَنْ يَقُولُ مَا يُؤْتِي

1346. The payments refer to the regular Charity established by Islam—the obligatory alms. If you look upon them as a fine or a burden, their virtue is lost. If you rejoice that you have there an opportunity of helping the Community to maintain its standards of public assistance and to suppress the unseemly beggary and loathsome importunity whose relief is only governed by motives of getting rid of awkward obstacles on the way, then your outlook is entirely different. You wish for organised and effective efforts to solve the problems of human poverty and misery. In doing so, you get nearer to God, and you earn the good wishes and prayers of godly men, led by our holy Leader Mustafā.

As a fine, and watch  
For disasters for you: on them  
Be the disaster of Evil:  
For God is He that heareth  
And knoweth (all things).

مَعْرَمًا وَيَتَرَبَّصُّ بِكُمْ الدَّاءُ الَّذِي  
عَلَيْهِمْ دَآئِرَةُ السَّوءِ  
وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ۝

99. But some of the desert Arabs  
Believe in God and the Last Day,  
And look on their payments  
As pious gifts bringing them  
Nearer to God and obtaining  
The prayers of the Apostle.  
Aye, indeed they bring them  
Nearer (to Him): soon will God  
Admit them to His Mercy: <sup>1347</sup>  
For God is Oft-Forgiving,  
Most Merciful.

۹۹-وَمِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ مَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَ  
الْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَيَتَّخِذُ مَا يُنْفِقُ  
قُرْبَىٰ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَصَلَوَاتُ الرَّسُولِ  
أَلَا إِنَّهَا قُرْبَىٰ لَهُمْ سَيُدْخِلُهُمُ اللَّهُ فِي  
رَحْمَتِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ۝

C. 97.—The vanguard of Faith think nothing  
(ix. 100-118.) Of self-sacrifice. Their reward is God's  
Good Pleasure. Even those who do wrong  
But repent will obtain His Mercy: not so  
Those who persist in Unfaith, Hypocrisy,  
And Mischief. God's grace is free and abounding  
For the righteous. Even if they waver  
Or fail, He will turn to them in Mercy,  
If only they repent and come back unto Him.

### SECTION 13.

100. **THE** vanguard (of Islam)—<sup>1348</sup>  
The first of those who forsook  
(Their homes) and of those  
Who gave them aid, and (also)  
Those who follow them  
In (all) good deeds,—  
Well-pleased is God with them,  
As are they with Him:

۱۰۰-وَالشَّاقِقُونَ الْأَوَّلُونَ  
مِنَ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالْأَنْصَارِ  
وَالَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُمْ بِإِحْسَانٍ  
رَّضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ

1347. The Mercy of God is always present, as the sun is always shining. But when we have prepared ourselves to receive it, we come to the full enjoyment of it, as a man who was in a shade comes out by his effort into the open, and basks in sunshine.

1348. The vanguard of Islam—those in the first rank—are those who dare and suffer for the Cause and never flinch. The first historical examples are the Muhājirs and the Anṣār. The Muhājirs—those who forsook their homes in Mecca and migrated to Medina, the holy Apostle being among the last to leave the post of danger, are mentioned first. Then come the Anṣār, the Helpers, the citizens of Medina who invited them, welcomed them, and gave them aid, and who formed the pivot of the new Community. Then are mentioned all who follow them in good deeds: not only the early heroes and ordinary men and women who had been Companions of the Apostle or had seen him, but men and women in all ages who have lived noble lives. In spite of all their sacrifice and suffering they rejoice in the precious gift of the Good Pleasure of God, and their Salvation is the Supreme Felicity which such Good Pleasure gives, symbolised by the Gardens of Heaven.

For them hath He prepared  
Gardens under which rivers flow,<sup>1349</sup>  
To dwell therein (for ever):  
That is the supreme Felicity.

وَأَمَّا لَهُمْ جَنَّاتُ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ  
خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ

101. Certain of the desert Arabs  
Round about you are Hypocrites,  
As well as (desert Arabs) among  
The Medina folk:<sup>1350</sup> they are  
Obstinate in hypocrisy: thou  
Knowest them not: We know  
them:  
Twice shall We punish them:<sup>1351</sup>  
And in addition shall they be  
Sent to a grievous Penalty.

وَمِنْ حَوْلِكَ مِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ مُنْفِقُونَ  
وَمِنْ أَهْلِ الْمَدِينَةِ مَرَدُوا عَلَى الْبَغَايِ  
لَا تَعْلَمُهُمْ نَحْنُ نَعْلَمُهُمْ  
سَنُعَذِّبُهُمْ مَرَّتَيْنِ  
ثُمَّ يَرْدُّونَ إِلَى عَذَابٍ عَظِيمٍ

بِشْرَافِ

102. Others (there are who) have  
Acknowledged their  
wrong-doings:  
They have mixed an act  
That was good with another<sup>1352</sup>  
That was evil. Perhaps God  
Will turn unto them (in mercy):  
For God is Oft-Forgiving,  
Most Merciful.

وَأُخَرُونَ اعْتَرَفُوا بِذُنُوبِهِمْ  
خَلَطُوا عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَآخَرَ سَيِّئًا  
عَسَى اللَّهُ أَنْ يَتُوبَ عَلَيْهِمْ  
إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

103. Of their goods take alms,  
That so thou mightest  
Purify and sanctify them;  
And pray on their behalf.  
Verily thy prayers are a source  
Of security for them:  
And God is One  
Who heareth and knoweth.

خُذْ مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةً  
تُطَهِّرُهُمْ وَتُزَكِّيهِمْ بِهَا وَصَلِّ عَلَيْهِمْ  
إِنَّ صَلَاتَكَ سَكَنٌ لَهُمْ  
وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

1349. Note how this symbolism comes in in the descriptions of the final accomplishment of the destiny of man. In mathematical science it would be like a letter or formula which would sum up a long course of reasoning. In the graphic arts it would be like a Lotus in Buddhism, which expresses a whole complex of emotional or religious experiences. In music it would be like the characteristic notes in a Rāga or Rāgini. In this very Sūra it occurs before in ix. 72 and ix. 89, where see n. 1341. We are considering the good and bad Bedouins and rounding up the argument about them.

1350. The desert Arabs were not all simple folk. There were cunning hypocrites among them: both among certain tribes encamped round about Medina and certain others in Medina itself. I understand that both groups are of the 'A'rāb, to whom the context refers, and not of the settled citizens of Medina, whose Hypocrites were already referred to in previous sections. They might look simple, but they were in their ignorance all the more obstinate and hypocritical.

1351. Their punishment in this world was double, viz. not only in their discomfiture, but because in their obstinate ignorance, they failed to understand the accomplished facts, while cleverer men realised that their hostility to Islam was hopeless. In addition to their discomfiture in this life, they would have to meet the spiritual penalties to come.

1352. There were some whose will was weak and succumbed to evil, although there was much good in them. To them is held out the promise of forgiveness if they would repent and undertake all acts of Muslim charity, which would purify their souls, aided by the prayers of God's Messenger. Then, would they get the Peace that comes from purity and right conduct.



104. **K**now they not that God  
Doth accept repentance from  
His votaries and receives  
Their gifts of charity, and that  
God is verily He,  
The Oft-Returning, Most Merciful?

۱۰۴- أَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ يَقْبَلُ التَّوْبَةَ  
عَنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَأْخُذُ الصَّدَقَاتِ  
وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ۝

105. And say: "Work  
(righteousness) : 1353  
God will observe your work,  
And His Apostle, and the  
Believers :  
Soon will ye be brought back  
To the Knower of what is  
Hidden and what is open :  
Then will He show you  
The truth of all that ye did."

۱۰۵- وَقُلْ اْعْمَلُوا فَسَيَرَى اللَّهُ عَمَلَكُمْ  
وَرَسُولُهُ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ  
وَسَتُرَدُّونَ إِلَىٰ عِلْمِ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ  
فَيُنْزِلُكُمْ  
بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ۝

106. There are (yet) others,  
Held in suspense for the command  
Of God, whether He will  
Punish them, or turn in mercy 1354  
To them : and God  
Is All-Knowing, Wise.

۱۰۶- وَآخَرُونَ مُّرْجُونَ لِأَمْرِ اللَّهِ  
إِمَّا يَعْذِبُهُمْ وَإِمَّا يَنْتَوِبُ عَلَيْهِمْ  
وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ۝

107. **A**nd there are those 1355  
Who put up a mosque

۱۰۷- وَالَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مَسْجِدًا

1353. The repentant should be encouraged, after their repentance, to amend their conduct. The kindly interest of their brethren in them will strengthen them in virtue and blot out their past. When they go back into Eternity, they will understand the healing grace which saved them, just as the evil ones will then have their eyes opened to the real truth of their spiritual degradation (ix. 94). The similar words, in verse 84 and here, clench the contrast.

1354. Three categories of men are mentioned, whose faith was tested and found wanting in the *Tabūk* affair, but their characteristics are perfectly general, and we may here consider them in their general aspects: (1) the deep-dyed hypocrites, who when found out make excuses because otherwise they will suffer ignominy; they are unregenerate and obstinate, and there is no hope for them (ix. 101); (2) there are those who have lapsed into evil, but are not altogether evil; they repent and amend, and are accepted (ix. 102-105); and (3) there are doubtful cases, but God will judge them (ix. 106). A fourth category is mentioned in ix. 107, which will be discussed later.

1355. Three categories of Hypocrites having already been mentioned (n. 1354), a fourth class of insidious evil-doers is now mentioned, whose type is illustrated in the story of the Qubāa "Mosque of mischief (*al-hirār*)". Qubāa is a suburb of Medina, about three miles to the south-east. When the Holy Prophet arrived at Medina for Hīrat, he rested four days in Qubāa before entering the town of Medina. Here was built the first mosque, the "Mosque of Piety" (*Taqwā*), or the mosque of the power of Islam (*Qiteat-ul-Islām*), to which he frequently came during his subsequent stay in Medina. Taking advantage of these sacred associations, some Hypocrites of the Tribe of Banī Qanām built an opposition mosque in Qubāa, pretending to advance Islam. In reality they were in league with a notorious enemy of Islam, one Abū 'Amir, who had fought against Islam at Uhūd and who was now, after the battle of Hunain (A.H. 9), in Syria; his confederates wanted a mosque for him to come to, but it would only be a source of mischief and division, and the scheme was disapproved.

- By way of mischief and infidelity—  
To disunite the Believers—  
And in preparation for one<sup>1356</sup>  
Who warred against God  
And His Apostle aforetime.  
They will indeed swear  
That their intention is nothing  
But good; but God doth declare  
That they are certainly liars.
108. Never stand thou forth therein.  
There is a mosque whose  
foundation<sup>1357</sup>  
Was laid from the first day  
On piety; it is more worthy  
Of thy standing forth (for prayer)  
Therein. In it are men who  
Love to be purified; and God  
Loveth those who make  
themselves pure.<sup>1358</sup>
109. Which then is best?—he that  
Layeth his foundation  
On piety to God  
And His Good Pleasure?—or he  
That layeth his foundation  
On an undermined sand-cliff<sup>1359</sup>  
Ready to crumble to pieces?  
And it doth crumble to pieces  
With him, into the fire  
Of Hell. And God guideth not  
People that do wrong.
110. The foundation of those  
Who so build is never free

ضَرَارًا وَكُفْرًا وَتَفْرِيقًا بَيْنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ  
وَأَرْصَادًا لِلَّذِينَ هَارَبُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ مِنْ  
تَبَلُّبٍ وَلِيُخْلِقَ لَكُمْ آيَاتٍ أَنْ تَرْضَوْا أَلَا الْحَسَنَى  
وَاللَّهُ يَشْهَدُ  
أَنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ ○

١٠٨- لَا تَقُمْ فِيهِ أَبَدًا  
لَسْجِدٍ أَتَيْتَ عَلَى التَّقْوَى مِنْ أَوَّلِ  
يَوْمٍ أَحَقُّ أَنْ تَقُومَ فِيهِ  
فِيهِ رِجَالٌ يُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يَتَطَهَّرُوا  
وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُطَهَّرِينَ ○

١٠٩- أَفَمَنْ أَنَسَّ بُنْيَانَهُ عَلَى  
تَقْوَى مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانٍ  
خَيْرٌ أَمْ مَنْ أَنَسَّ بُنْيَانَهُ  
عَلَى شَفَا جُرُوفٍ هَارٍ  
فَأَنهَارُ بِهِ فِي نَارٍ جَهَنَّمَ  
وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ○

١١٠- لَا يَزَالُ بُنْيَانُهُمُ الَّذِي

1356. Abū 'Amr, surnamed the *Rāhib* (Monk), as he had been in touch with Christian monks. See last note.

1357. The original "Mosque of Piety" built by the holy Apostle himself

1358. The true Muslim must be pure in body, mind, and heart. His motives should always be sincere, and his religion without any alloy of worldly gain.

1359. A man who builds his life on Piety (which includes sincerity and the purity of all motives) and his hopes on the Good Pleasure of God, builds on a firm foundation of rock that will never be shaken. In contrast to him is the man who builds on a shifting sand-cliff on the brink of an abyss, already undermined by forces which he does not see. The cliff and the foundations all crumble to pieces along with him, and he is plunged into the Fire of misery from which there is no escape.

From suspicion and shakiness<sup>1360</sup>  
In their hearts, until  
Their hearts are cut to pieces.  
And God is All-Knowing, Wise.

بَنَوْرِبَهُ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ إِلَّا أَنْ تَقَطَّعَ  
قُلُوبُهُمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ۝

1360

#### SECTION 14.

111. God hath purchased of the Believers  
Their persons and their goods;  
For theirs (in return)  
Is the Garden (of Paradise):<sup>1361</sup>  
They fight in His Cause,  
And slay and are slain:  
A promise binding on Him  
In Truth, through the Law,  
The Gospel, and the Qurān:<sup>1362</sup>  
And who is more faithful  
To his Covenant than God?  
Then rejoice in the bargain  
Which ye have concluded:  
That is the achievement supreme.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ اشْتَرَى مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ  
أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُمْ بِأَنْ لَهُمُ الْجَنَّةُ  
يُغَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَيَقْتُلُونَ وَ  
يُقْتَلُونَ وَعْدٌ عَلَيْهِ حَقٌّ  
فِي الْكُتُبِ وَالْإِنْجِيلِ وَالْقُرْآنِ  
وَمَنْ أَوْفَى بِعَهْدِهِ مِنَ اللَّهِ  
فَأَسْتَشِيرُوا بِبَيْعِكُمُ الَّذِي بَايَعْتُمْ بِهِ  
وَذَلِكَ هُوَ الْقَوْلُ الْعَظِيمُ ۝

1360. The parable is continued further. The heart of man is the seat of his hopes and fears, the foundation of his moral and spiritual life. If that foundation is on an undermined sand-cliff already crumbling to pieces, what security or stability can he have? He is being shaken by alarms and suspicions and superstitions, until like the edge of a sand-cliff they are cut clean away and fall into a heap of ruin and his spiritual life and all its land-marks are destroyed.

1361. In a human bargain both sides give something and receive some advantage. In the divine bargain of God with man, God takes man's will and soul and his wealth and goods, and gives him in return ever-lasting Felicity. Man fights in God's Cause and carries out His will, the Universal Will. All that he has to give up is the ephemeral things of this world, while he gains eternal salvation, the fulfilment of his highest spiritual hopes,—a supreme achievement indeed.

1362. We offer our whole selves and our possessions to God, and God gives us Salvation, i.e., eternal freedom from the bondage of this world. This is the true doctrine of redemption; and we are taught that this is the doctrine not only of the Qurān but of the earlier Revelations,—the original Law of Moses and the original Gospel of Jesus. Any other view of redemption is rejected by Islam, especially that of corrupted Christianity, which thinks that some other person suffered for our sins, and we are redeemed by his blood. It is our self-surrender that counts, not other people's merits. Our complete self-surrender may include fighting for the cause, both spiritual and physical. As regards actual fighting with the sword there has been some difference in the theological theories at different times, but very little in the practice of those who framed those theories. The Jewish wars were ruthless wars of extermination. The Old Testament does not mince matters on this subject. In the New Testament St. Paul, in commending the worthy fruits of Faith, mentions Gideon, Barak, and other warriors of the Old Testament as his ideals, "Who through faith subdued kingdoms, ..... waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens . . ." (Hebrews, xi. 32-34). The monkish morality of the Gospels in their present form has never been followed by any self-respecting Christian or other nation in history. Nor is it common sense to ignore lust of blood in unregenerate man as a form of evil which has to be combated "within the limits set by God" (Q. ix. 112).

112. Those that turn (to God) <sup>1363</sup>  
 In repentance; that serve Him,  
 And praise Him; that wander  
 In devotion to the Cause of God;  
 That bow down and prostrate  
 themselves  
 In prayer; that enjoin good  
 And forbid evil; and observe  
 The limits set by God;—  
 (These do rejoice). So proclaim  
 The glad tidings to the Believers.

113. It is not fitting,  
 For the Prophet and those  
 Who believe, that they should  
 Pray for forgiveness  
 For the Unbelievers, even though  
 They be of kin, after it is  
 Clear to them that they  
 Are companions of the Fire. <sup>1364</sup>

114. And Abraham prayed  
 For his father's forgiveness  
 Only because of a promise  
 He had made to him. <sup>1365</sup>  
 But when it became clear  
 To him that he was  
 An enemy to God, he  
 Dissociated himself from him:  
 For Abraham was most  
 Tender-hearted, forbearing. <sup>1366</sup>

115. And God will not mislead <sup>1367</sup>  
 A people after He hath

۱۱۲-الَّذِينَ يَتُوبُونَ الْعِندُونَ  
 الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ وَالسَّامِعُونَ  
 الرَّكْعُونَ السُّجُودُونَ  
 الْأُمُورُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَالنَّاهُونَ عَنِ  
 الْمُنْكَرِ وَالْحَافِظُونَ لِحُدُودِ اللَّهِ  
 وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ○

۱۱۳-مَا كَانَ لِلنَّبِيِّ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا  
 أَنْ يَسْتَغْفِرُوا لِلْمُشْرِكِينَ  
 وَلَوْ كَانُوا أُولَىٰ قُرْبَىٰ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ  
 لَهُمْ أَنَّهُمْ أَصْحَابُ الْجَحِيمِ ○

۱۱۴-وَمَا كَانَ اسْتِغْفَارُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لِأَبِيهِ  
 إِلَّا عَنْ مَوْعِدَةٍ وَعَدَهَا إِيَّاهُ  
 فَلَمَّا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ أَنَّهُ عَدُوٌّ لِلَّهِ  
 تَبَرَّأَ مِنْهُ  
 إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لَأَوَّاهٌ حَلِيمٌ ○

۱۱۵-وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُضِلَّ قَوْمًا بَعْدَ إِذْ

1363. We are to rejoice that by giving up such small things as ourselves and our possessions we are to be rewarded with such a great thing as the eternal life of felicity. The truly righteous, whose lives in various aspects are described in this verse, do so rejoice. The good news is to be proclaimed to all Believers, including the weakest among us, so that they may profit by that example.

1364. This is usually understood to refer to the prayers for the dead, (1) if they died unrepentant after Islam was preached to them, (2) if they actively resisted or opposed the Faith *to the last*, and (3) if the person praying knows that on account of deliberate contumacy the deceased may be said to have had the doors of mercy closed to him. How is he to know? The knowledge must come from special commands as declared by the Holy Prophet in his lifetime regarding individuals. Where no light is available from this source we must follow the best judgment we can.

1365. Abraham and his unbelieving father are referred to in vi. 74. Apparently when Abraham was convinced that the conditions mentioned in the last note applied to his father, he gave up praying for him, as the physical bond was cut off by the spiritual hostility. For the promise to pray for his father, see xix. 47.

1366. Abraham was loyal and tender-hearted, and bore with much that he disapproved, being in this a prototype of Muṣṭafā, and it must have gone against his grain to cut off relations in that way. But it would obviously be wrong for a human being to entreat God for mercy on people who had finally rejected God.

1367. God's clear commands are given, so that Believers may not be misled by their human frailty into unbecoming conduct.

Guided them: on the contrary  
He will make clear to them  
What to fear (and avoid)—  
For God hath knowledge  
Of all things.

هَدَاهُمْ حَتَّى يَبَيِّنَ لَهُمْ مَا يَتَّقُونَ  
إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ۝

116. **U**nto God belongeth  
The dominion of the heavens  
And the earth. He giveth life  
And He taketh it. Except for Him  
Ye have no protector  
Nor helper.

۱۱۶-لِلَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَكُمُ التَّمَلُّكُ وَالْأَرْضِ  
يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ وَمَا لَكُم مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ  
مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ ۝

117. God turned with favour  
To the Prophet, the Muhājirs <sup>1368</sup>  
And the Anṣār,—who followed  
Him in a time of distress,  
After that the hearts of a part <sup>1369</sup>  
Of them had nearly swerved  
(From duty); but He turned  
To them (also): for He is  
Unto them Most Kind,  
Most Merciful.

۱۱۷-لَقَدْ تَابَ اللَّهُ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ وَالْمُهَاجِرِينَ  
وَالْأَنْصَارِ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ فِي سَاعَةِ  
الْعُسْرَةِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا كَادَ يَزِيغُ قُلُوبُ  
فَرِيقٍ مِّنْهُمْ ثُمَّ تَابَ عَلَيْهِمْ  
إِنَّهُ بِهِمْ رَؤُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ ۝

118. (He turned in mercy also)  
To the three who were left  
Behind; (they felt guilty) <sup>1370</sup>  
To such a degree that the earth

۱۱۸-وَعَلَى الثَّلَاثَةِ الَّذِينَ خَلْفُوا  
حَتَّى إِذَا ضَاقَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الْأَرْضُ

1368. Cf. ix. 100. The Muhājirs were the people who originally forsook their homes in Mecca and followed Muṣṭafā in exile to Medina. The Anṣār were the Medina people who received them with honour and hospitality into their city. Both these groups were staunch supporters of Islam, and proved their Faith by great sacrifices. But in the difficult days of the Tabūk expedition some of them, not perversely, but out of lethargy and human weakness, had failed to follow the standard. They were forgiven, and they afterwards acquitted themselves with zeal.

1369. Note that the "swerving from duty" was merely an inclination due to the weakness of human nature in the face of new difficulties; that it only affected a part of the men for a time; and that it was overcome even in their case by the grace of God, so that they all did their duty, and were freely forgiven their incipient weakness, which they conquered. There were three exceptions, which are referred to in the next verse.

1370. Among the Faithful, the largest number consisted of those who were perfectly staunch and ever ready to do their duty. They obtained the love and good pleasure of God. Next came a few who wavered because their will was weak and they were daunted by the dangers and difficulties that faced them; God's saving grace protected them and they conquered their weakness, and did not fail in their duty; God forgave them and accepted their repentance. Lastly, in the illustration taken from the Tabūk affair, there were some who actually failed in their duty, not from contumacy or ill-will, but from thoughtlessness, slackness, and human weakness: they actually failed to obey the Holy Prophet's summons, and were naturally called on to explain, and were excluded from the life of the Community. Their mental state is here described graphically. Though the earth is spacious, to them it was constrained. In their own souls they had a feeling of constraint. In worldly affluence they felt poor in spirit. They realised that they could not flee from God, but could only find solace and refuge in coming back to Him. They freely repented and showed it in their deeds, and God freely forgave and took them to His grace. Though illustrated by the particular examples of the Anṣār, Ka'b, Mar'ar, and Hilāl, the lesson is perfectly general and is good for all times.

Seemed constrained to them,  
For all its speciousness,  
And their (very) Souls seemed  
Straitened to them,—  
And they perceived that  
There is no fleeing from God  
And no refuge but to Himself.  
Then He turned to them,  
That they might repent:  
For God is Oft-Returning,  
Most Merciful.

بِمَا رَحِبَتْ وَضَاعَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ أَنْفُسُهُمْ  
وَعَلُّوا أَنْ لَا مَلْجَأَ مِنَ اللَّهِ  
إِلَّا إِلَيْهِ  
ثُمَّ تَابَ عَلَيْهِمْ لِيَتُوبُوا  
إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ۝

- C. 98.—To be true in word and deed is to hold  
(ix. 119-129.) Our selfish desires at bay, and follow  
God's Call: in this is our fullest satisfaction  
And reward. But our striving should include  
Study and teaching, for the Brethren's benefit.  
For God's Message increases our Faith  
And leads us to love Him and trust Him,  
The Lord of the Throne of Glory Supreme.

#### SECTION 15.

119. **۞** Oh ye who believe! Fear God  
And be with those  
Who are true (in word and deed).

۱۱۹-يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ  
وَكُونُوا مَعَ الصَّادِقِينَ ۝

120. It was not fitting  
For the people of Medina  
And the Bedouin Arabs  
Of the neighbourhood, to refuse  
To follow God's Apostle,  
Nor to prefer their own lives  
To his: because nothing  
Could they suffer or do,  
But was reckoned to their credit  
As a deed of righteousness,—  
Whether they suffered thirst,  
Or fatigue, or hunger, in the Cause  
Of God, or trod paths  
To raise the ire of the Unbelievers,  
Or received any injury<sup>1371</sup>

۱۲۰-مَا كَانَ لِأَهْلِ الْمَدِينَةِ  
وَمَنْ حَوْلَهُمْ مِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ  
أَنْ يَتَخَفُوا عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ  
وَلَا يَرْغَبُوا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ عَنْ نَفْسِهِ  
ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ لَا يُصِيبُهُمْ ظَمَأٌ  
وَلَا نَصَبٌ وَلَا مَخْصَصَةٌ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ  
وَلَا يَطُونَ مَوْطِئًا يَغِيظُ الْكُفَّارَ  
وَلَا يَنَالُونَ مِنْ عَدُوِّ ثِيلاً

1371. Again, the illustration is that of Tabūk, but the lesson is general. We must not hold our own comfort or lives dearer than that of our Leader, nor desert him in the hour of danger. If we have true devotion, we shall hold our own lives or comfort cheap in comparison to his. But whatever service we render to the Cause of God, and whatever sufferings, hardships, or injuries we endure, or whatever resources we spend for the Cause,—all goes to raise our degree in the spiritual world. Nothing is lost. Our reward is far greater in worth than any little service we can render, or any little hardship we can suffer, or any little contributions we can make to the Cause. We "painfully attain to joy".

Whatever from an enemy:  
For God suffereth not  
The reward to be lost  
Of those who do good;—

إِلَّا كُتِبَ لَهُمْ بِهِ عَمَلٌ صَالِحٌ  
إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضَيِّعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ١٢١

121. Nor could they spend anything  
(For the Cause)—small or great—  
Nor cut across a valley,<sup>1373</sup>  
But the deed is inscribed  
To their credit; that God  
Might requite their deed  
With the best (possible reward).

وَلَا يُنْفِقُونَ نَفَقَةً صَغِيرَةً وَلَا  
كَبِيرَةً

وَلَا يَقْطَعُونَ وَادِيًا إِلَّا كُتِبَ لَهُمْ  
بِحَيْرَتِهِمُ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ١٢٢

122. Nor should the Believers  
All go forth together:  
If a contingent  
From every expedition  
Remained behind,  
They could devote themselves  
To studies in religion,  
And admonish the people  
When they return to them,—  
That thus they (may learn)<sup>1373</sup>  
To guard themselves (against evil).

وَمَا كَانَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لِيَنْفِرُوا كَافَّةً  
فَلَوْلَا نَفَرَ مِنْ كُلِّ فِرْقَةٍ مِنْهُمْ طَائِفَةٌ

لِيَتَفَقَّهُوا فِي الدِّينِ  
وَلِيُنذِرُوا قَوْمَهُمْ إِذَا رَجَعُوا إِلَيْهِمْ

لَعَلَّهُمْ يَحْذَرُونَ ١٢٣

#### SECTION 16.

123. O ye who believe! Fight  
The Unbelievers who gird you  
about,<sup>1374</sup>  
And let them find firmness  
In you: and know that God  
Is with those who fear Him.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قَاتِلُوا الَّذِينَ  
يَلُونَكُمْ مِنَ الْكُفَّارِ وَلْيَجِدُوا فِيكُمْ غِلَظَةً

وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ ١٢٤

1372. *Cut across a valley*: this is specially mentioned in a symbolical way, as denoting an individual act of heroism, dash, or bravery. To march with the troops along valleys, or, spiritually, tread paths of danger along with our Comrades, is good and praiseworthy; but one that dashes across a stream, all alone, for some special deed of bravery where the *elan* of comradeship does not sustain him, needs special mention. Notice that both the things mentioned in this verse,—the spending of resources and the dashing across a valley—are individual acts, while those mentioned in the last verse are collective acts, which are in some ways easier. The individual acts having been mentioned, the next verse follows naturally.

1373. Fighting may be inevitable, and where a call is made by the righteous Imām, it should be obeyed. But fighting is not to be glorified to the exclusion of all else. Even among those who are able to go forth, a party should remain behind—one in each township or circle—for purposes of study; so that when the fighters return home, their minds may be attuned again to the more normal interests of religious life, under properly instructed teachers. The students and teachers are soldiers of the *jihād* in their spirit of obedience and discipline.

1374. When conflict becomes inevitable, the first thing is to clear our surroundings of all evil, for it is only evil that we can rightly fight. To evil we must put up a stout and stiff resistance. Mealy-mouthed compromises are not right for soldiers of truth and righteousness. They are often a compound of cowardice, weariness, greed, and corruptibility.

124. Whenever there cometh down
- <sup>1375</sup>

A Sūra, some of them say :

"Which of you has had  
His faith increased by it?"Yea, those who believe,—  
Their faith is increased,  
And they do rejoice.

۱۲۴-وَإِذَا مَا أُنزِلَتْ سُورَةٌ فَمِنْهُمْ مَن  
يَقُولُ إِنَّا كُنَّا زَادَتْهُ هَذِهِ آيَاتًا  
فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فَوَزَّادُهُمْ آيَاتًا  
وَهُمْ يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ ○

125. But those in whose hearts
- <sup>1376</sup>

Is a disease,—it will add doubt

To their doubt, and they will die  
In a state of Unbelief.

۱۲۵-وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ فَزَادَهُمُ  
رِجْسًا إِلَى رِجْسِهِمْ وَمَاتُوا وَهُمْ كَافِرُونَ ○

126. See they not that they

Are tried every year<sup>1377</sup>

Once or twice? Yet they

Turn not in repentance,  
And they take no heed.

۱۲۶-أَوَلَا يَرَوْنَ أَنَّهُمْ يُفْتَنُونَ فِي كُلِّ  
عَامٍ مَرَّةً أَوْ مَرَّتَيْنِ ثُمَّ لَا يَتُوبُونَ  
وَلَا هُمْ يَذْكُرُونَ ○

127. Whenever there cometh down

A Sūra, they look at each other,

(Saying), "Doth any one see  
you?"

Then they turn aside:

God hath turned their hearts<sup>1378</sup>.(From the light); for they  
Are a people that understand not.

۱۲۷-وَإِذَا مَا أُنزِلَتْ سُورَةٌ نَّظَرَ بَعْضُهُمْ  
إِلَى بَعْضٍ هَلْ يَرِيكُمْ مِّنْ أَحَدٍ ثُمَّ انْصَرَفُوا صَرَفَ  
اللَّهُ قُلُوبَهُمْ بَأْسَ لَهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ ○

128. How hath come unto you

An Apostle from amongst

۱۲۸-لَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ

1375. The incompatibility of Unfaith and Faith are contrasted in this section in respect of revelation and the divine teacher. The Unbelievers laugh at revelation, and say to each other mockingly: "Does this increase your faith?" To the Believer every new aspect of God's truth as revealed increases his faith, and wonder, and gratitude. He rejoices, because he gets added strength for life and achievement.

1376. Cf. u. 10 and several similar passages. Just as the light, which to healthy eyes gives enlightenment, causes pain to the diseased eye, which emits unclean matter, so, to those spiritually diseased, God's grace is unwelcome and they put forth more doubts to cover their disease. And they die in their disease, and of their disease. Note the aptness of the metaphor.

1377. Yet, in spite of their infidelity, one or two chances are given them every year. The door is not closed to them. Yet they deliberately turn away, and take no heed of all the warnings which their own nature and the teaching and example of good men should give them.

1378. Even the Unbelievers, in their heart and conscience, feel uncomfortable when they turn aside from Faith and Truth, and therefore their turning aside is figured by furtive glances, such as we may suppose literally to have been cast by the Hypocrites in the assemblies of the holy Apostle. Then they slink away, feeling superior in their minds. And yet, if they only knew it, their contumacy deprives them of God's grace and light. They are turning Grace away, and when God withdraws it altogether, they perish utterly.



Yourselves: it grieves him  
That ye should perish:  
Ardently anxious is he  
Over you: to the Believers  
Is he most kind and merciful.<sup>1379</sup>

129. But if they turn away,  
Say: "God sufficeth me:  
There is no god but He:  
On Him is my trust,—  
He the Lord of the Throne  
(Of Glory) Supreme!"<sup>1380</sup>

أَنْفُسَكُمْ عَزِيزٌ عَلَيْهِ مَا عَنِتُّمْ حَرِيصٌ  
عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَؤُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ ١٣٧٩

١٣٨٠- فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقُلْ حَسْبِيَ اللَّهُ ۚ  
لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَهُوَ رَبُّ  
الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ ١٣٨٠



1379. The tender heart of the Teacher is grieved that any among his flock should rush headlong to ruin. He watches ardently over them, and whenever any of them show signs of Faith, his kindness and mercy surround him and rejoice over him.

1380. But if the *Message* is rejected, he still proclaims the burning Faith of his heart, which is unquenchable. God is all in all. To trust Him is to find the accomplishment of all spiritual desire. His grandeur is figured by a lofty Throne, supreme in glory!

Thus have we been led, through a notable incident in Muḥammad's earthly career, to truths of the highest spiritual import.

INTRODUCTION TO SŪRA X (*Yūnus*).

Chronologically this Sūra and the five that follow (Sūras xi, xii, xiii, xiv, and xv) are closely connected, and were revealed in the late Meccan period, as the great event of the Hijrat was gradually approaching down the stream of Time. But their chronology has no particular significance.

On the other hand their arrangement in the gradation of Quranic teaching fits in with the subject-matter. S. viii. and S. ix. were mainly concerned with the first questions that arose on the formation of the new and organised Community of Islam in its conflict with those who wished to suppress or destroy it or use force to prevent its growth and the consolidation of its ideals. See Introductions to those Sūras. The present group leads us to the questions that face us when external hostility has been met, and our relations to God have to be considered from a higher stand-point than that of self-preservation. How does revelation work? What is the meaning of divine grace and its withdrawal? How do the Messengers of God deliver their Message? How should we receive it?

All these questions revolve round the revelation of the Qurān and each Sūra of this group except the 13th has the Abbreviated Letters A. L. R. attached to it. S. xiii. has the letters A. L. M. R., and we shall discuss this variation when we come to S. xiii.

As shown in Appendix I (Sipāra 3), the Abbreviated Letters are mystic symbols, about whose meaning there is no authoritative explanation. If the theory advanced in n. 25 to ii. 1 has any validity, and the present group A. L. R. is cognate to the group A. L. M., we have to consider and form some idea in our minds as to the probable meaning of the variation. We took A. L. M. to be a symbol of those Sūras that deal with the beginning, the middle, and the end of man's spiritual history,—the origin, the present position, and the things to come in the Last Days (eschatology, to use a theological term). We took A. L. to stand as symbols of the first two, and M. of the last. In the present group of Sūras we find hardly any eschatological matter, and therefore we can understand the absence of M., the symbol standing for such matter. In its place comes R., which is phonetically allied to L. L. is produced by the impact of the tongue to the front of the palate, and R. to the middle of the palate. In many languages the letters L. and R. are interchangeable; e.g., in Arabic, *al-Raḥmān* becomes ar-Raḥmān, and R. in imperfect enunciation becomes L., as in Chinese lallation. If L. is a symbol of present-day things looking to the future, we may take R. as a symbol of present-day things looking within, i.e., into the interior of the organisation of the Ummat. And this symbolism fits in with the subject-matter of the Sūras in question. But no one should be dogmatic in speculation about mystic Symbols.

Let us now consider Sūra X alone. The central theme is that God's wonderful Creation must not be viewed by us as a creation of material things only, once made and finished with. Most wonderful of all is how He reveals Himself to men through

Apostles and Scriptures; how Apostles are rejected by men, and the Message disbelieved until it is too late for repentance; and how, as in the case of Yūnus (Jonah) and his people, even the rejection (when repentance supervenes) does not prevent God's grace and mercy from working, and how far that working is beyond man's comprehension.

### *Summary*

The wonderful working of the Spirit of God through man by revelation seems like magic to men; yet they could find Signs and Messages from Him in the sun and the moon and the constantly varying yet regular phenomena of nature, from which man should take a lesson of constancy and Faith (x. 1-20, and C. 99).

All the goodness or beauty that man meets in the life around him proceeds from God. Yet man is blind and will not understand (x. 21-40, and C. 100).

As all things and beings proceed from God, so will they return to Him, and He is ever true. Why then does ungrateful man make untrue phantoms for himself instead of rejoicing in the good news which He sends? (x. 41-70, and C. 101).

God revealed Himself through Noah, but Noah's people rejected him and perished. He spoke through Moses to Pharaoh, but Pharaoh was stiff-necked and arrogant, and when he repented at all, it was too late. (x. 71-92, and C. 102).

Everywhere want of faith causes people to perish. But the people of Yūnus repented, and God saved them by His wonderful grace. So God will deliver the Believers. When the Truth comes from God, follow it and be patient, for God is the most righteous of Judges (x. 93-109, and C. 103).

C. 99.—Men may wonder that a man  
(x. 1—20.) Like unto them should bring a Message  
From God, but God's Message shines  
Forth through all nature and Creation.  
He guides the human spirit, if only  
Man will have Faith and put his hope  
In God. Wonderful are God's relations  
With man, yet man is ungrateful  
And runs to fancies and fanciful gods.  
Glory to the One true God, Who made  
Mankind as One, and holds alone  
The secrets of the Unseen in His  
Great and good Universal Plan.

## Sūra X.

Yunus, or Jonah.

In the name of God, Most Gracious,  
Most Merciful.

1. **H. I. R.** <sup>1381</sup>  
These are the *Āyats* <sup>1382</sup>  
Of the Book of Wisdom.
2. Is it a matter  
Of wonderment to men  
That We have sent  
Our inspiration to a man  
From among themselves? — <sup>1383</sup>  
That he should warn mankind  
(Of their danger), and give  
The good news to the Believers  
That they have before their Lord  
The lofty rank of Truth, <sup>1384</sup>  
(But) say the Unbelievers :  
" This is indeed  
An evident sorcerer ! "
3. Verily your Lord is God,  
Who created the heavens  
And the earth in six Days, <sup>1385</sup>



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

ا-الزلزلة

تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْكِتَابِ الْحَكِيمِ

ا-كَانَ لِلنَّاسِ عَجَبًا

اَنْ اَوْحَيْنَا اِلَى رَجُلٍ

مِّنْهُمْ اَنْ اَنْذِرَ النَّاسَ

وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِينَ اٰمَنُوْا

اَنْ لَهُمْ قَدْ مَّصْدِقٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ

قَالَ الْكَافِرُوْنَ

اِنَّ هٰذَا سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ

اِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ اِلٰهٌ اَلَدِّى خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ

وَالْاَرْضِ فِى سِتَّةِ اَيَّامٍ

الزلزلة

وقد صلى الله عليه وسلم

1381 For the Abbreviated Letters generally as mystic Symbols, see Appendix I. For this particular combination see the Introduction to this Sūra.

1382. *Āyāt*—Signs, or Verses of the Quran. Here both meanings are to be understood. Each verse is a nugget of wisdom. And in the verses immediately following, e.g., x. 3-6, examples are given of the wonders of God's material Creation. If the starry heavens impress us with their sublimity as Signs of God's wisdom and power, how much more wonderful is it that He should speak to lowly man through His Messengers, in man's own language, so that he can understand?

1383. Is it not still more wonderful that the inspired man should be one of ourselves? The Arabs had known Muḥammad in other relations and conditions, and when the mighty Message came through his mouth—the message of Wisdom and Power, such as no man could speak as from himself, least of all a man not instructed in human learning,—they could only in their wonder attribute it to magic and sorcery. They failed to understand that magic and sorcery were projections of their own mind, while here was solid, enduring Truth from God!

1384. God's Message was and is not all smooth and agreeable. The first thing is to convince us of our sin and wrong-doing, and warn us of our danger. If we have Faith, we then learn what a high rank we obtain in the sight of God, through His glorious Truth, which makes us pure and free.

And is firmly established <sup>1386</sup>  
On the Throne (of authority),  
Regulating and governing all things.  
No intercessor (can plead with Him)  
Except after His leave  
(Hath been obtained). This  
Is God your Lord; Him therefore  
Serve ye: will ye not  
Celebrate His praises? <sup>1387</sup>

4. To Him will be your return—  
Of all of you. The promise  
Of God is true and sure. <sup>1388</sup>  
It is He who beginneth  
The process of creation, <sup>1389</sup>  
And repeateth it, that He  
May reward with justice  
Those who believe  
And work righteousness,  
But those who reject Him  
Will have nothing but draughts <sup>1390</sup>  
Of boiling fluids,  
And a Penalty grievous:  
Because they did reject Him.

5. It is He who made the sun  
To be a shining glory <sup>1391</sup>

ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ  
يُدَبِّرُ الْأَمْرَ  
مَا مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا مِنْ عِنْدِ رَبِّهِ  
ذِكْرُ اللَّهِ رُكْبَةً لِلْعَبِيدِ  
أَكَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ ○

٢-إِلَيْهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا  
وَعَدَ اللَّهُ حَقًّا  
إِنَّهُ يَبْدَأُ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ  
لِيَجْزِيَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ  
بِالْقِسْطِ  
وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَهُمْ شَرَابٌ مِنْ حَمِيمٍ  
وَعَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ۖ كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ ○

٥-هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ الشَّمْسُ زَهَابًا

1386. *Istawā*, with the preposition *ilā* after it, means "to design, to set oneself to execute a design;" hence in u 29, I have translated, "His design comprehended the heavens," to emphasise the fact that the heavens were not eternal or co-eternal with Him, but were a part of His design, and in a sense, as they appear to man subjectively, a complement to the creation of man's Earth. With the preposition *alā* after it, as here and in vii. 54 and elsewhere, the meaning seems to be literally, "to mount or ascend," and figuratively to be firmly established, to sit firm and unshaken, beyond question." The Throne of authority represents symbolically many ideas: e. g., (1) that God is high above all His Creation; (2) that He regulates and governs it, as a king does, whose authority is unquestionably recognised; (3) that He is not, therefore, like the gods of Greece and paganism, who were imagined to be in a world apart, careless of mankind, or jealous of mankind, but on the contrary, He (4) disposes of their affairs and all affairs continuously and with justice; (4) that the authority of His prophets, ministers, and messengers is derived from Him, and such intercession as they can make is by His will and permission.

1387. Cf. iii. 191.

1388. *Haqq*: true, right, for just ends, in right proportions, sure and certain: all these ideas are implied.

1389. Cf. n. 120 to ii. 117. God's creation is not a simple act, once done and finished with. It is continuous, and there are many stages, not the least important of which is the Hereafter, when the fruits of our life will be achieved.

1390. *Ḥamīm*: boiling fluid; it is associated, as in xxviii. 57, with *gassāq*, a dark, murky, or intensely cold fluid; both symbols of the grievous penalty that results from rebellion against God.

1391. The fitting epithet for the sun is *dhīā*, "splendour and glory of brightness", and for the moon is "a light" (of beauty), the cool light that illuminates and helps in the darkness of the night. But the moon is also a measure of time. The simplest observation can keep pace with the true lunar months and lunar years, which are all that is required by a pastoral people. For agriculture solar years are required, as they indicate the changes of the seasons, but ordinary solar years are never exact; even the solar year of 365½ days requires correction by advanced astronomical calculation.

And the moon to be a light  
(Of beauty), and measured out  
Stages for her, that ye might  
Know the number of years  
And the count (of time).  
Nothing did God create  
But in truth and righteousness.<sup>1392</sup>  
(Thus) doth He explain His Signs  
In detail, for those who  
understand.<sup>1393</sup>

وَالْقَمَرَ نُورًا وَقَدَرَهُ مَنَازِلَ  
لِتَعْلَمُوا عَدَدَ السِّنِينَ وَالْحِسَابَ  
مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ  
ذَلِكَ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ  
يُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ○

6. Verily, in the alternation  
Of the Night and the Day,  
And in all that God  
Hath created, in the heavens  
And the earth, are Signs  
For those who fear Him.<sup>1394</sup>

إِنَّ فِي اخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ  
وَمَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ  
لَايَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ○

7. Those who rest not their hope  
On their meeting with Us,  
But are pleased and satisfied  
With the life of the Present,  
And those who heed not  
Our Signs,—<sup>1395</sup>

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يَرْجُونَ لِقَاءَنَا  
وَرَضُوا بِالْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَاطْمَأَنَّنُوا بِهَا  
وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ آيَاتِنَا غَافِلُونَ ○

8. Their abode is the Fire,  
Because of the (evil)  
They earned.

أُولَئِكَ مَا لَهُمْ النَّارُ  
بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ ○

9. Those who believe,  
And work righteousness,—  
Their Lord will guide them  
Because of their Faith :<sup>1396</sup>

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ  
يَهْدِيهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ بِإِيمَانِهِمْ تَجْرِي مِنْ

1392 Everything in God's creation has use and purpose, and fits into a Design. It is true in every sense of the word and it is good and just. It is not merely a matter of sport or freak (xxi. 16). Though so varied, it proclaims God's Unity; though a limited free-will is granted to creatures, the results of evil (which is rebellion) are neutralised and harmony is restored.

1393. Cf. ix. 11.

1394. Cf. ii. 164.

1395. Those who fall from Grace are described by three epithets : (1) the meeting with God is not the object of their hope and earnest desire, but something else, *viz.* (2) the material good of this world, which not only attracts them but apparently gives them complete satisfaction, so that there is no glow of the Future in their horizon, and (3) they are deaf and dead to the resounding and living Message of God. (1) and (2) refer to the extinction of Faith in them, and (3) to their falling a prey to the evils of this world in their conduct. They are contrasted in x. 9 with the Faith and the Righteousness of those who accept Grace.

1396. Their Faith is the cause as well as the instrument of their Guidance,—the Kindly Light which leads them as well as the Joy which fills their Soul. The usual symbols of Gardens and Fire are again contrasted,—in each case the result of Good or Evil in Life.

Beneath them will flow  
Rivers in Gardens of Bliss.

10. (This be) their cry therein :  
"Glory to Thee, Oh God!"  
And "Peace" be their greeting  
therein!  
And the close of their cry<sup>1397</sup>  
Will be: "Praise be to God,  
The Cherisher and Sustainer  
Of the Worlds!"

## SECTION 2.

11. If God were to hasten for men  
The ill (they have earned)  
As they would fain hasten on  
The good,—then would  
Their respite be settled at once.<sup>1398</sup>  
But We leave those  
Who rest not their hope  
On their meeting with Us,  
In their trespasses, wandering  
In distraction to and fro.

12. When trouble toucheth a man,  
He crieth unto Us  
(In all postures)—lying down<sup>1399</sup>  
On his side, or sitting,  
Or standing. But when We  
Have solved his trouble,  
He passeth on his way as if  
He had never cried to Us  
For a trouble that touched him!  
Thus do the deeds of transgressors  
Seem fair in their eyes!<sup>1400</sup>

تَحْتَهُمْ ٱلْأَنْهَارُ فِى جَنَّٰتِ ٱلْعِزِّ ۝

١٠- دَعَوُهُمْ فِيهَا سُبْحَانَكَ ٱللَّهُمَّ

وَسَبِّحَتُهُمْ فِيهَا سَلَامٌ

وَآخِرُ دَعْوَاهُمْ

أَنَّ ٱلْحَمْدَ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ ٱلْعَالَمِينَ ۝

١١- وَلَوْ يُعَجِّلُ ٱللَّهُ لِلنَّاسِ ٱلشَّرَّ

ٱسْتَعْجَلُوا لَهُمْ يَأْتِىهِمْ لِقَاضِى ٱلْيَوْمِ

أَجَلُهُمْ

فَنَذَرُ ٱلَّذِينَ لَا يَرْجُونَ لِقَآءَنَا

فِى طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ ۝

١٢- وَإِذَا مَسَّ ٱلْإِنْسَانَ الضَّرُّ دَعَا

لِجَنَّتِهِ أَوْ قَاعِدًا أَوْ قَائِمًا

فَلَمَّا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُ ضَرَّهُ

مَرَّ كَأَن لَّمْ يَدْعُنَا إِلَىٰ ضَرِّهِ مِن قَبْلُ

كَذَٰلِكَ نَزَّلْنَا ٱلنُّسُوفَ

مَآ كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ۝

1397. A beautiful piece of spiritual melody! They sing and shout with joy, but their joy is in the Glory of God! The greetings they receive and the greetings they give are of Peace and Harmony! From first to last they realise that it is God Who cherished them and made them grow, and His rays are their Light.

1398. Those who have no spiritual hope for the Future grasp at any temporary advantage, and in their blindness even mockingly ask for immediate punishment for their sins (viii. 32), thus vainly challenging God, in Whom they do not believe. If the beneficent God were to take them at their word, they would have no chance at all. Their doom would be sealed. But even the respite they get they use badly. They merely wander about distractedly like blind men, to and fro. Cf. ii. 15.

1399. Not only do men fail to use their respite: even those who have a superficial belief in God call on Him in their trouble but forget Him when He has relieved their trouble. Their Faith is not strong enough to make them realise that all good proceeds from God. But in moments of trouble they use every position, literally and figuratively, to appeal to Him.

1400. Those without Faith are selfish, and are so wrapped up in themselves that they think every good that comes to them is due to their own merits or cleverness. That is itself a cause of their undoing. They do not see their own faults.

13. Generations before you  
We destroyed when they  
Did wrong : their Apostles  
Came to them with Clear Signs,  
But they would not believe !  
Thus do We requite  
Those who sin !
14. Then We made you heirs  
In the land after them,  
To see how ye would behave ! <sup>1401</sup>
15. But when Our Clear Signs  
Are rehearsed unto them,  
Those who rest not their hope  
On their meeting with Us,  
Say : " Bring us a Reading <sup>1402</sup>  
Other than this, or change this,"  
Say : " It is not for me,  
Of my own accord,  
To change it : I follow  
Naught but what is revealed  
Unto me : if I were  
To disobey my Lord,  
I should myself fear the Penalty  
Of a Great Day (to come)."
16. Say : " If God had so willed,  
I should not have rehearsed it  
To you, nor would He  
Have made it known to you. <sup>1403</sup>  
A whole lifetime before this  
Have I tarried amongst you :  
Will ye not then understand ?" <sup>1404</sup>

۱۳- وَلَقَدْ أَهْلَكْنَا الْقُرُونِ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ  
لَمَّا ظَلَمُوا وَجَاءَهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ  
وَمَا كَانُوا لِيُؤْمِنُوا  
كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْقَوْمَ الْمُجْرِمِينَ ○

۱۴- ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ خَلَائِفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ  
مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ لِنَنْظُرَ كَيْفَ تَعْمَلُونَ ○

۱۵- وَإِذَا تُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُنَا بِحُجَّتٍ  
قَالَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَرْجُونَ لِقَاءَنَا  
أُتِيَ بِقُرْآنٍ غَيْرِ هَذَا أَوْ بَدِّلْهُ  
قُلْ مَا يَكُونُ لِي  
أَنْ أُبَدِّلَ لَهُ مِنْ تِلْقَائِي نَفْسِي  
إِنْ أَسِئْتُ إِلَّا مَا يُؤْتِي الْإِنِّي أَخَافُ  
إِنْ عَصَيْتُ رَبِّي عَذَابٌ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ ○

۱۶- قُلْ لَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا تَلَوْتُهُ  
عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَا أَدْرَاكُمْ بِهِ ۖ  
فَقَدْ بَيَّنَّاتُ فَيْكُمْ عُمَرًا مِّنْ قَبْلِهِ  
أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ○

1401. This is addressed to the Quraish in the first instance, for they had succeeded to the 'Ad and the Thamūd heritage. But the application is universal, and was true of the 'Abbasī Empire in the time of Hārūn-ar-Rashīd, or the Muslim Empire in Spain or the Turkish Empire in its palmiest days, and indeed, apart from political power, to the Muslims and non-Muslims of our own days.

1402. Reading : in the Arabic, the word is " Qur'ān ", which may mean Reading or in the special sense, the Qur'ān. The duty of God's Messenger is to deliver God's Message as it is revealed to him, whether it please or displease those who hear it. Selfish men want to read their own desires or fancies into religious precepts, and thus they are often willing to use Religion for their own ends. Most of the corruptions of Religion are due to this cause. But Religion is not to be so prostituted.

1403. It is in God's Plan that He should reveal Himself in certain ways to His creatures, and His Messengers are the instruments that carry out His Will. It is in itself His gracious Mercy that He should thus make His Will known. We should be grateful for His guidance instead of carping at it.

1404. Muḥammad Muḥafā had lived his whole life of purity and virtue amongst his people, and they knew and acknowledged it before He received his mission. They knew he loved his nation and was loyal to it. Why should they turn against him when he had to point out under inspiration all their sins and wrong-doing? It was for their own good. And he had to plead again and again with them : " will you not understand, and see what a glorious privilege it is for you to receive true guidance from God ?"



17. ~~Who~~ **Who** doth more wrong  
Than such as forge a lie  
Against God, or deny  
His Signs? But never  
Will prosper those who sin.
18. They serve, besides God,  
Things that hurt them not  
Nor profit them, and they say:  
“These are our intercessors  
With God.” Say: “Do ye  
Indeed inform God of something  
He knows not, in the heavens <sup>1408</sup>  
Or on earth?—Glory to Him!  
And far is He above the partners  
They ascribe (to Him)!”
19. Mankind was but one nation, <sup>1406</sup>  
But differed (later). Had it not  
Been for a Word <sup>1407</sup>  
That went forth before  
From thy Lord, their differences  
Would have been settled  
Between them.
20. They say: “Why is not  
A Sign sent down to him  
From his Lord?” Say:  
“The Unseen is only  
For God (to know).  
Then wait ye: I too

۱۰۔ فَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرَىٰ  
عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا أَوْ كَذَّبَ بِآيَاتِهِ  
إِنَّهُ لَا يَفْقَهُهُ الْمُجْرِمُونَ ○

١٨- وَاعْبُدُونِ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُهُمْ وَلَا يَضُرُّهُمْ وَلَا يَنْفَعُهُمْ وَيَقُولُونَ هَؤُلَاءِ شُفَعَاؤُنَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ قُلْ أَتُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ  
بِمَا لَا يَعْلَمُ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ  
سُبْحَنَهُ وَتَعَالَى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ○

١٩- وَمَا كَانَ النَّاسُ إِلَّا أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً  
فَاخْتَلَفُوا<sup>١</sup>

وَلَوْ لَا كَلِمَةُ سَبَقَتْ مِنْ رَبِّكَ  
لَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ فِي مَا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ ○

۲۰- وَيَقُولُونَ لَوْلَا أُنزِلَ عَلَيْهِ آيَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِ فَقُلْ إِنَّمَا الْغَيْبُ بِيَدِ اللَّهِ فَاَنْتَ تَنْظُرُونَ  
إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ

1405. When we shut our eyes to God's glory and goodness, and go after false gods, we give some plausible excuse to ourselves, such as that they will intercede for us. But how can stocks and stones intercede for us? And how can men intercede for us, when they themselves have need of God's Mercy? Even the best and noblest cannot intercede as of right, but only with His permission (x. 3). To pretend that there are other powers than God is to invent lies and to teach God. There is nothing in heavens or earth that **He** does not know, and there is no other like unto Him.

1406. Cf. ii. 213. All mankind was created one, and God's Message to mankind is in essence one, the Message of Unity and Truth. But as selfishness and egotism got hold of man, certain differences sprang up between individuals, races, and nations, and in His infinite Mercy He sent them messengers and messages to suit their varying mentality, to test them by His gifts, and stir them up to emulation in virtue and piety (v. 51).

1407. Here we have again the mystic doctrine of "the Word". Cf. vi 115, ix 40 and iv. 171. "Word" is the Decree of God, the expression of His Universal Will or Wisdom in a particular case. When men began to diverge from one another (see last note), God made their very differences subserve the higher ends by increasing their emulation in virtue and piety, and thus pointing back to the ultimate Unity and Reality.

Will wait with you." 1408

مَنْ الْمُسْتَظْرِينَ ۝

- C. 100.—The good, the beautiful, and the useful  
(x. 21—40.) In man's life are derived from God;  
Yet man is ungrateful. He runs  
After the ephemeral things of this life;  
Yet they are no better than the green  
Of the fields, that lasts for a season  
Ere it perish! God's call is to an eternal  
Home of Peace. Will ye not answer it?  
Know ye not that it is He Who sustains  
And cherishes? No partner has He.  
And He speaks to His Creatures and guides them  
Through His wonderful Book unmatched.

### SECTION 3.

21. ~~When~~ When We make mankind  
Taste of Our mercy after  
Adversity hath touched them,  
Behold! they take to plotting  
Against Our Signs! Say:  
"Swifter to plan is God!"  
Verily, Our messengers record  
All the plots that ye make! 1409
22. He it is who enableth you  
To traverse through land  
And sea; so that ye board  
Ships;—they sail with them  
With a favourable wind,  
And they rejoice thereat.  
Then comes a stormy wind  
And the waves come to them  
From all sides, and they think  
They are being overwhelmed:  
They cry unto God, sincerely  
Offering (their) duty unto Him,  
Saying, "If Thou dost deliver us  
From this, we shall truly

۲۱- وَإِذَا آذَيْنَا النَّاسَ رَحْمَةً مِّنْ بَعْدِ  
ضَرَاءٍ مَّتَّعْنَاهُمْ إِذَا لَهُم مَّكْرٌ فِي آيَاتِنَا  
قُلِ اللَّهُ أَسْرَعُ مَكْرًا  
إِنَّ رُسُلَنَا يَكْتُبُونَ مَا تَمْكُرُونَ ۝

۲۲- هُوَ الَّذِي يُسَيِّرُكُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ  
حَتَّىٰ إِذَا كُنْتُمْ فِي الْفُلِ  
وَجَرَيْنَ بِهِمْ بِرِيحٍ طَيِّبَةٍ وَفَرِحُوا بِهَا  
جَاءَتْهُمْ أَرْبَعٌ عَاصِفٌ وَجَاءَهُمُ الْمَوْجُ  
مِنْ كُلِّ مَكَانٍ وَظَنُوا أَلَّهُمْ أَحْبَطُ  
وَدَعَا إِلَهُ الْدِّينِ لَهُ الدِّينِ  
لَقَدْ أَتَيْنَا مِنْ هَذِهِ

1408. Their demand for a Sign is disingenuous. All nature and revelation furnishes them with incontestable Signs. What they want is the Book of the Unseen opened out to them like the physical leaves of a book. But they forget that a physical Book is on a wholly different plane from God's Mysteries, and that their physical natures cannot apprehend the mysteries. They must wait. Truth will also wait. But the waiting in the two cases is in quite different senses. Cf. vi. 158 and ix. 52.

1409. Man turns his thoughts in adversity to the spiritual forces outside his ken. But as soon as the trouble is past, he not only forgets them but actually plots against them, as if they—and not he himself—had caused his trouble. But such people are poor ignorant creatures, not realising that the Universal Plan of God is swifter to stop their petty plans, and that though they fail, the record of them remains eternally against them.

Show our gratitude | <sup>1410</sup>

. But when he delivereth them,  
Behold! they transgress  
Insolently through the earth  
In defiance of right!  
Oh mankind! your insolence <sup>1411</sup>  
Is against your own souls,—  
An enjoyment of the life  
Of the Present: in the end,  
To Us is your return,  
And We shall show you  
The truth of all that ye did.

h. The likeness of the life  
Of the Present is  
As the rain which We  
Send down from the skies: <sup>1412</sup>  
By its mingling arises  
The produce of the earth—  
Which provides food  
For men and animals:  
It grows till the earth  
Is clad with its golden  
Ornaments and is decked out  
(In beauty): the people to whom  
It belongs think they have  
All powers of disposal over it:  
There comes Our command  
By night or by day,  
And We make it  
Like a harvest clean-mown,  
As if it had not flourished

لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ ○

٢٢- فَلَنَأْجُزَنَّهُمْ إِذَا هُمْ  
يَبْتَغُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ  
يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّمَا بَغَيْتُمْ عَلَى أَنْفُسِكُمْ  
مَتَاعَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا  
ثُمَّ إِلَيْنَا مَرْجِعُكُمْ  
فَنُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ○

٢٣- إِنَّمَا مَثَلُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا  
كَمَاءٍ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ  
فَاخْتَلَطَ بِهِ نَبَاتُ الْأَرْضِ  
مِمَّا يَأْكُلُ النَّاسُ وَالْأَنْعَامُ  
حَتَّى إِذَا أَخَذَتِ الْأَرْضُ زُخْرُفَهَا  
وَارْتَيْنَتْ وَظُنَّ أَهْلُهَا  
أَنَّهُمْ قَدْ أُوتُوا عَلَيْهِهَا  
أَنَّهُمْ أَمْرًا بَعِيدًا  
فَجَعَلْنَاهَا حَصِيدًا كَأَن لَّمْ

1410. All the great inventions and discoveries on which man prides himself are the fruit of that genius and talent which God has freely given of His grace. But the spirit of man remains petty, as is illustrated by the parable from the sea. How the heart of man rejoices when the ship goes smoothly with favourable winds! How in adversity it turns, in terror and helplessness, to God, and makes vows for deliverance! and how those vows are disregarded as soon as the danger is past! Cf. vi. 63.

1411. In our insolence and pride we do not see how small and ephemeral is that part of us which is mortal. We shall see it at last when we appear before our Judge. In the meantime our ridiculous pretensions only hurt ourselves.

1412. Another beautiful Parable, explaining the nature of our present life. The rain comes down in drops and mingles with the earth. Through it, by God's matchless artistry, the womb of the earth is made fruitful. All kinds of good, useful, and beautiful grains, vegetables, and fruits are produced for men and animals. The earth is covered in its bravery of green and gold and all kinds of colours. Perhaps the "owner" takes all the credit to himself, and thinks that this will last eternally. A hailstorm or a blast, a frost or a volcanic eruption, comes and destroys it: or it may be, even normally, that the time of harvest comes, and the fields and orchards are stripped bare by some blight or disease. Where is the beauty and bravery of yesterday? All that is left is dust and ashes! What more can we get from this physical material life?

Only the day before !  
Thus do We explain  
The Signs in detail  
For those who reflect.

تَعْنِ بِالْأَمْسِ كَذَلِكَ نَقْصِلُ الْآيَاتِ  
لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ○

25. But God doth call  
To the Home of Peace : <sup>1413</sup>  
He doth guide whom He pleaseth  
To a Way that is straight.

۲۵- وَاللَّهُ يَدْعُو إِلَى دَارِ السَّلَامِ  
وَيَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ

26. To those who do right  
Is a goodly (reward)—  
Yea, more (than in measure) ! <sup>1414</sup>  
No darkness nor shame  
Shall cover their faces ! <sup>1415</sup>  
They are Companions of the  
Garden ;  
They will abide therein  
(For aye) !

۲۶- لِلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا الْحُسْنَىٰ وَزِيَادَةٌ  
وَلَا يَرَوْهُنَّ أَوْجُهُهُمْ قَتَرٌ وَلَا ذِلَّةٌ  
أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ  
هُم فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ○

27. But those who have earned  
Evil will have a reward  
Of like evil : <sup>1416</sup> ignominy  
Will cover their (faces) :  
No defender will they have  
From (the wrath of) God :  
Their faces will be covered,  
As it were, with pieces  
From the depth of the darkness <sup>1417</sup>  
Of Night : they are Companions

۲۷- وَالَّذِينَ كَسَبُوا السَّيِّئَاتِ جَزَاءُ سَيِّئَةٍ  
بِمِثْلِهَا وَتَرْهَقُهُمْ ذِلَّةٌ  
مَا لَهُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِنْ عَاصِمٍ  
كَأَنَّمَا أُغْشِيَتْ وُجُوهُهُمْ قِطْعًا مِنَ  
الْبَیْلِ مُظْلِمًا أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ

1413. In contrast with the ephemeral and uncertain pleasures of this material life, there is a higher life to which God is always calling. It is called the Home of Peace. For there is no fear, nor disappointment, nor sorrow there. And all are called, and those will be chosen who have sought, not material advantages, but the Good Pleasure of God. *Salām*, Peace, is from the same root as *Islām*, the Religion of Unity and Harmony.

1414. The reward of the righteous will be far more than in proportion to their merits. For they will have the supreme bliss of being near to God, and (in *sūfī* language) "seeing His face".

1415. The face is the symbol of the Personality, the inner and real Self, which is the antithesis of the outer and ephemeral Self. It will be illuminated with God's Light, behind which is no shadow or darkness. All its old shortcomings will be blotted out, with their sense of shame, for there will be Perfection, as in God's sight.

1416. Note that the evil reward is for those who have "earned" evil, i.e., brought it on themselves by the deliberate choice of evil. Further, in the justice of God, they will be requited with evil similar to, and not greater in quantity or intensity, than the evil they had done,—unlike the good, who, in God's generosity, get a reward far greater than anything they have earned or could possibly earn.

1417. Night is the negation of Light and metaphorically of joy and felicity. The intensive is indicated by "the depth of the darkness of Night."

Of the Fire: they will  
Abide therein (for aye) !

28. One Day shall We gather them  
All together. Then shall We say  
To those who joined gods (with Us):  
"To your place ! ye and those  
Ye joined as 'partners'."  
We shall separate them,  
And their "partners" shall say :  
"It was not us  
That ye worshipped ! <sup>1418</sup>

29. "Enough is God for a witness  
Between us and you : we  
Certainly knew nothing  
Of your worship of us ! " <sup>1419</sup>

30. There will every soul prove  
(The fruits of) the deeds  
It sent before <sup>1420</sup> : they will  
Be brought back to God  
Their Lord in truth,  
And their invented falsehoods  
Will leave them in the lurch. <sup>1421</sup>

#### SECTION 4.

31. Say : "Who is it that  
Sustains you (in life)  
From the sky and from the  
earth ? <sup>1422</sup>

هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ

٢٨- وَيَوْمَ نَحْشُرُهُمْ جِجَعًا ثُمَّ نَقُولُ  
لِلَّذِينَ  
أَلَّفُوا مَكَانَكُمْ أَنْتُمْ وَشُرَكَاءُكُمْ  
فَزَلَّلْنَا بَيْنَهُمْ وَقَالَ شُرَكَاءُهُمْ  
مَا كُنْتُمْ إِلَّا أَنْتُمْ تَعْبُدُونَ

٢٩- فَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ  
إِنْ كُنَّا عَنْ عِبَادَتِكُمْ لَغْفِيلِينَ

٣٠- هُنَالِكَ تَبْلُوا كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مِمَّا أَسْلَفَتْ وَ  
رُدُّوا إِلَى اللَّهِ مَوْلَاهُمُ الْحَقُّ  
وَصَلَ عَنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ

٣١- قُلْ مَنْ يُزِدُكُمْ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ  
الْأَرْضِ

1418. The false gods are not real : they are only the figments of the imaginations of those who indulged in the false worship. But the prophets or great or good men whose names were vainly taken in competition with the name of God, and the personified Ideas or Idols treated in the same way would themselves protest against their names being used in that way, and show that the worship was paid not to them, but to the ignorance or superstition or selfish lusts of the false worshippers.

1419. See last note. They did not even know that they were being falsely worshipped in that way.

1420. Cf. ii. 95, where the verb used is *qaddama*. The verb *aslafa*, used here, is nearly synonymous.

1421. Instead of their false ideas helping them, they will desert them and leave them in the lurch. Cf. vi. 24.

1422. Sustenance may be understood in the sense of all the provision necessary for maintaining physical life as well as mental and spiritual development and well-being. Examples of the former are light and rain from heaven and the produce of the earth and facilities of movement on land and sea and in air. Examples of the latter are the moral and spiritual influences that come from our fellow-men, and from the great Teachers and Prophets.

Or who is it that  
Has power over hearing <sup>1423</sup>  
And sight? And who  
Is it that brings out  
The living from the dead  
And the dead from the living? <sup>1424</sup>  
And who is it that  
Rules and regulates all affairs? <sup>1425</sup>  
They will soon say, "God".  
Say, "Will ye not then  
Show piety (to Him)?"

أَمَّنْ يَكُنْكَ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ  
وَمَنْ يُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ  
وَيُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتَ مِنَ الْحَيِّ  
وَمَنْ يُدِيرُ الْأَمْرَ  
فَسَيَقُولُونَ اللَّهُ  
فَقُلْ أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ

32. Such is God, your Cherisher  
And Sustainer in truth:  
Apart from Truth,  
What (remains) but error? <sup>1426</sup>  
How then are ye turned away?

۳۲- فَذَلِكُمُ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمُ الْحَقُّ  
فَمَاذَا بَعْدَ الْحَقِّ إِلَّا الضَّلَالُ  
فَأَنَّى تُصْرَفُونَ

33. Thus is the Word  
Of thy Lord proved true <sup>1427</sup>  
Against those who rebel:  
Verily they will not believe.

۳۳- كَذَلِكَ حَقَّتْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ عَلَى  
الَّذِينَ فَسَقُوا أَنَّهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ

34. Say: "Of your 'partners', <sup>1428</sup>  
Can any originate creation  
And repeat it?" Say:  
"It is God Who originates  
Creation and repeats it:  
Then how are ye deluded  
Away (from the truth)?"

۳۴- قُلْ هَلْ مِنْ شَرِكَا لَكُمْ مَنْ يَبْدَأُ  
الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ  
قُلْ اللَّهُ يَبْدَأُ الْخَلْقَ  
ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ فَأَنَّى تُؤْفَكُونَ

1423. Just two of our ordinary faculties, hearing and sight, are mentioned, as examples of the rest. All the gifts of God, physical and spiritual, are enjoyed and incorporated by us by means of the faculties and capacities with which He has endowed us.

1424. Cf. iii. 27 and n. 371; vi. 95 and n. 920; and xxx. 19.

1425 This is the general summing up of the argument. The government of the whole Creation and its maintenance and sustenance is in the hands of God. How futile then would it be to neglect His true worship and go after false gods?

1426. The wonderful handiwork and wisdom of God having been referred to, as the real Truth, as against the false worship and false gods that men set up, it follows that to disregard the Truth must lead us into woeful wrong, not only in our beliefs but in our conduct. We shall err and stray and be lost. How then can we turn away from the Truth?

1427. Disobedience to God brings its own terrible consequences on ourselves. The Law, the Word, the Decree, of God must be fulfilled. If we go to false gods, our Faith will be dimmed, and then extinguished. Our spiritual faculties will be dead.

1428. The argument is now turned in another direction. The false gods can neither create out of nothing nor sustain the creative energy which maintains the world. Nor can they give any guidance which can be of use for the future destiny of mankind: on the contrary they themselves (assuming they were men who were deified) stand in need of such guidance. Why then follow vain fancies, instead of going to the source of all knowledge, truth, and guidance, and worship, serve, and obey the One True God?

35. Say: "Of your 'partners'  
Is there any that  
Can give any guidance  
Towards Truth?" Say: "It is God  
Who gives guidance  
Towards Truth. Is then He  
Who gives guidance to Truth  
More worthy to be followed,  
Or he who finds not guidance  
(Himself) unless he is guided?  
What then is the matter  
With you? How judge ye?"

36. But most of them follow  
Nothing but fancy: truly  
Fancy can be of no avail  
Against Truth. Verily God  
Is well aware of all  
What they do.

37. ~~This~~ This Qurān is not such  
As can be produced  
By other than God;  
On the contrary it is  
A confirmation of (revelations)  
That went before it,  
And a fuller explanation<sup>1429</sup>  
Of the Book—wherein  
There is no doubt—  
From the Lord of the Worlds.

38. Or do they say,  
"He forged it"?  
Say: "Bring then  
A Sūra like unto it,  
Or call (to your aid)  
Any one you can,  
Besides God, if it be  
Ye speak the truth!"<sup>1430</sup>

۳۵- قُلْ هَلْ مِنْ شَرِكَاكُمْ مَنْ  
يَهْدِي إِلَى الْحَقِّ قُلِ اللَّهُ يَهْدِي لِلْحَقِّ  
أَمَنْ يَهْدِي إِلَى الْحَقِّ  
أَحَقُّ أَنْ يُتَّبَعَ أَكُنْ لَا يَهْدِي  
إِلَّا أَنْ يَهْدِيَ  
فَمَا لَكُمْ كَيْفَ تَحْكُمُونَ ○

۳۶- وَمَا يَتَّبِعُهُمْ إِلَّا طَغْيًا  
إِنَّ الظَّنَّ لَا يُغْنِي مِنَ الْحَقِّ شَيْئًا  
إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ بِمَا يَفْعَلُونَ ○

۳۷- وَمَا كَانَ هَذَا الْقُرْآنُ  
أَنْ يُفْتَرَى مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ  
وَلَكِنْ تَصْدِيقُ الَّذِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ  
وَتَفْصِيلُ الْكِتَابِ  
لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ مِنْ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ○

۳۸- أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ  
قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِثْلِهِ  
وَادْعُوا مَنِ اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ  
إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ○

1429. *The Book*: Cf. iii. 23 and n. 366 God's revelation throughout the ages is one. The Qurān confirms, completes, and further explains the one true revelation, which has been sent by the One True God in all ages.

1430. Cf. ii. 23 and n. 42.

39. Nay, they charge with falsehood  
That whose knowledge they  
Cannot compass, even before  
The elucidation thereof <sup>1431</sup>  
Hath reached them : thus  
Did those before them  
Make charges of falsehood :  
But see what was the end  
Of those who did wrong! <sup>1432</sup>

٣٩- بَلْ كَذَّبُوا بِآلَمِهِمْ يُحِيطُوا بِعِلْمِهِ  
وَلَكِنَّا يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا  
كَذَلِكَ كَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ  
فَانْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الظَّالِمِينَ ○

40. Of them there are some  
Who believe therein,  
And some who do not:  
And thy Lord knoweth best  
Those who are out for mischief.

٤٠- وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِهِ  
وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ لَا يُؤْمِنُ بِهِ  
وَرَبُّكَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُفْسِدِينَ ○

C. 101.—Men but wrong their own souls in shutting out  
(x. 41-70.) The Truth of God. To Him will be

Their return. They have been warned  
At all times and among all peoples  
By chosen Apostles of God, whom they  
Have flouted. The Day will come  
When they will see the majesty, the glory,  
The goodness, and the justice of God.  
But they invent fancies and falsehoods.  
Let not their blasphemies and falsehoods  
Grieve the men of God : for falsehoods  
And false ones will never prosper.

#### SECTION 5.

41. If they charge thee  
With falsehood, say:  
"My work to me,  
And yours to you!" <sup>1433</sup>

٤١- وَإِنْ كَذَّبُوكَ فَقُلْ  
إِنِّي عَنْكُمْ وَعَلَيْكُمْ ○

1431. *Taa'wil* : elucidation, explanation, final fulfilment, (Cf. vii. 53. The Message of God not only gives us rules for our every-day conduct, but speaks of high matters of mystic significance, which require elucidation in three ways : (1) by instruction from Teachers of great spiritual experience, (2) by experience from the actual facts of life, and (3) by the final fulfilment of the hopes and warnings which we now take on trust through our Faith. The Unbelievers reject God's Message simply because they cannot understand it and without giving it even a chance of elucidation in any of these ways.

1432. Wrong-doers always come to grief ultimately. The true course of history shows it from a broad standpoint. But they are so headstrong that they prejudge issues in their ignorance before they are decided.

1433. When the man of God is rejected and charged with falsehood, he does not give up his work, but continues to teach and preach his Message. He can well say to those who interfere with him : "Mind your own business : supposing your charge against me is true, you incur no responsibility : I have to answer for it before God : and if I do my duty and deliver my Message, your rejection does not make me liable for your wrong-doing : you will have to answer before God."



Ye are free from responsibility  
For what I do, and I  
For what ye do !"

42. Among them are some who  
(Pretend to) listen to thee :  
But canst thou make the deaf  
To hear,—when moreover  
They are without  
understanding ? <sup>1434</sup>

43. And among them are some  
Who look at thee :  
But canst thou guide  
The blind,—even though  
They cannot see ?

44. Verily God will not deal  
Unjustly with man in aught :  
It is man that wrongs  
His own soul. <sup>1435</sup>

45. One day He will  
Gather them together :  
(It will be) as if  
They had tarried <sup>1436</sup>  
But an hour of a day :  
They will recognise each other : <sup>1437</sup>  
Assuredly those will be lost  
Who denied the meeting  
With God and refused  
To receive true guidance.

46. Whether We show thee  
(Realised in thy lifetime)  
Some part of what We  
Promise them,—or We

أَنْتُمْ بَرِيءُونَ مِمَّا أَعْمَلُ  
وَأَنَا بَرِيءٌ مِمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ○

٢٢- وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يَسْتَمِعُونَ إِلَيْكَ  
أَفَأَنْتَ تُسْمِعُ الصُّمَّ  
وَلَوْ كَانُوا لَا يَعْقِلُونَ ○

٢٣- وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يَنْظُرُ إِلَيْكَ  
أَفَأَنْتَ تَهْدِي الْعُمْى  
وَلَوْ كَانُوا لَا يَبْصُرُونَ ○

٢٤- إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَظْلِمُ النَّاسَ شَيْئًا  
وَلَكِنَّ النَّاسَ أَنْفُسُهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ ○

٢٥- وَيَوْمَ يُخْشَرُهُمْ كَأَن لَّمْ يَلْبَسُوا  
إِلَّا سَاعَةً مِّنَ النَّهَارِ  
يَتَعَارَفُونَ بَيْنَهُمْ  
قَدْ خَسِرَ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِلِقَاءِ اللَّهِ  
وَمَا كَانُوا مُهْتَدِينَ ○

٢٦- وَإِنَّا نُرِيَنَّكَ  
بَعْضَ الَّذِي نَعِدُهُمْ أَوْ

1434. Cf. vi. 25, 36, 39 and notes. Hypocrites go to hear and see some great Teacher, but they get no profit out of it because they are not sincerely seeking the truth. They are like the blind, or the deaf, or the imbeciles. It is impossible to guide them, because they have not the will to be guided.

1435. God cannot be blamed for man's evil, nor will He deal unjustly with man. He has given him faculties and means of guidance. If man goes wrong, it is because he wrongs himself.

1436. In eternity our life on this earth will look as if it had been just a little part of our little day, and so also will appear any interval between our death and the call to Judgment.

1437. We shall retain some perception of our mutual relations on earth, so that the righteous judgment which will be pronounced will be intelligible to us, and we shall be convinced of its righteousness.

Take thy soul (to Our Mercy)  
(Before that),—in any case,  
To Us is their return :  
Ultimately God is witness <sup>1439</sup>  
To all that they do.

47. **¶** To every people (was sent)  
An Apostle : when their Apostle <sup>1439</sup>  
Comes (before them), the matter  
Will be judged between them  
With justice, and they  
Will not be wronged.

48. They say : " When  
Will this promise  
Come to pass,—  
If ye speak the truth ? "

49. Say : " I have no power <sup>1440</sup>  
Over any harm or profit  
To myself except as God  
Willeth. To every People <sup>1441</sup>  
Is a term appointed :  
When their term is reached,  
Not an hour can they cause  
Delay, nor (an hour) can they  
Advance (in anticipation). "

تَتَوَقَّعُكَ وَاللَّيْلُ مَرَجُّهُمْ  
ثُمَّ اللَّهُ شَهِيدٌ  
عَلَى مَا يَفْعَلُونَ ○

٣٧. وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولٌ  
فَإِذَا جَاءَ رَسُولُهُمْ قُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْقِسْطِ  
وَهُمْ لَا يَظْلُمُونَ ○

٣٨. وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَى هَذَا الْوَعْدُ  
إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ○

٣٩. قُلْ لَا أَمْلِكُ لِنَفْسِي ضَرًّا وَلَا نَفْعًا  
إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ  
لِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلٌ  
إِذَا جَاءَ أَجَلُهُمْ فَلَا يَسْتَأْخِرُونَ سَاعَةً  
وَلَا يَسْتَقْدِرُونَ ○

1438. The Apostle is assured that the end of evil is evil, just as the end of good is good. Whether this result is made plain before his very eyes in his own lifetime or afterwards, makes no difference. The wicked should not rejoice if they are given rope and seem to have the upper hand for a time, nor should the righteous lose heart : for God's promise is sure and must come to pass. And in any case, the scales can only be partially, if at all, adjusted in this life. There is the final and complete adjustment on the Day of Judgment. God is All-Knowing, and all truth will be before Him

1439. Every people or generation or nation had its Message or Messenger : God revealed Himself to it in some way or another. If that Messenger was ignored or rejected, or his Message was twisted or misused, the Day of Reckoning will come, when perfect justice will be done and the whole Truth revealed. The Unbelievers mockingly say : " If that is true, pray tell us when that Day will come ! " The answer of the Messenger is : " It will come in good time : no one can either hasten or retard it. If you want me then to save you or if you fear that I shall harm you for your treatment of me, know that this matter is in the hands of God alone, Who will do perfect justice. Even in regard to myself, any harm or good that befalls me is by the command and in the power of God. "

1440. Cf. vii. 188.

1441. This repeats vii. 34, but the significance is different in the two contexts. Here the reply is to the Unbelievers' mocking incredulity (see n. 1439) as to whether there is such a thing as a Hereafter : they suggest to the man of God that if his claim of inspiration from God is true, he should get them punished at once for rejecting him. In vii. 34 the reference is to the punishment of iniquity as described in vii. 33 : sin is not necessarily punished at once : every People or generation gets a chance ; when their term is fulfilled, the final adjustment is made.

50. Say: "Do ye see,—  
If His punishment should come  
To you by night or by day,—<sup>1442</sup>  
What portion of it  
Would the Sinners  
Wish to hasten?"

51. "Would ye then believe in it  
At last, when it actually cometh  
To pass? (It will then be said:)  
'Ah! now? and ye wanted  
(Aforetime) to hasten it on!'

52. "At length will be said  
To the wrong-doers: 'Taste ye  
The enduring punishment!'<sup>1443</sup>  
Ye get but the recompense  
Of what ye earned!'"

53. They seek to be informed  
Of thee: "Is that true?"  
Say: "Aye! by my Lord!  
It is the very truth!  
And ye cannot frustrate it!"

## SECTION 6.

54. Every soul that hath sinned,  
If it possessed all  
That is on earth,  
Would fain give it in ransom:<sup>1444</sup>

هـ- قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ أَتَاكُمْ عَذَابُهُ  
بَيَّاتًا أَوْ نَهَارًا  
مَاذَا يُسْتَغْلَى مِنْهُ السَّاجِدُونَ ○

هـ- أَتَمَرًا إِذَا مَا وَقَعَ أَمْنْتُمْ بِهِ  
أَلَيْسَ وَقَدْ كُنْتُمْ بِهِ تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ ○

هـ- ثُمَّ قِيلَ لِلَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا ذُوقُوا  
عَذَابَ الْخُلْدِ  
هَلْ نَجُوزُونَ إِلَّا بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْسِبُونَ ○

هـ- وَيَسْتَعْجِلُونَكَ أَصْحَابُ هُوَ  
قُلْ إِنِّي وَرَبِّي إِلَهُ لَحَقٌّ  
وَمَا أَنْتُمْ بِمُعْجِزِينَ ○

هـ- وَلَوْ أَنَّ لِلْهَلِكِ نَفْسٍ ظَلَمَتْ  
مَآ فِي الْأَرْضِ لَافْتَدَتْ بِهِ

1442 The mockery of Unbelievers will be turned into panic when the wrath of God descends on them. It may do so suddenly, by night or by day, when they least expect it. Will they then say of any bit of it: "Let it be hastened?"

1443. This will be the final doom, and they will themselves have brought it on themselves! The psychology of the Unbelievers is here analysed and exposed. This particular argument begins at x. 47 and ends at x. 53. It begins with the general statement that every People has had due warning and explanation by means of an Apostle specially sent to them; that Apostle will be a relevant witness at the final Judgment, when the matter will be judged in perfect equity. Then follows a dialogue. The Unbelievers mock and say, "Why not bring on the Punishment now?" The reply to the Unbelievers is, "It will come in God's good time". The Believers are told to watch and see how the sinners would take it if the Punishment were to come at once. Would they not think it too sudden? When it actually comes, their panic will be indescribable. "Is that true?" say the Unbelievers. "It is the very truth," is the answer, "and nothing can ward it off."

1444. Cf. iii. 91.

They would declare (their)  
repentance <sup>1445</sup>  
When they see the Penalty:  
But the judgment between them  
Will be with justice,  
And no wrong will be done  
Unto them.

وَأَسْرُوا الْكَذَّامَةَ لَكَارَأَوِ الْعَذَابَ  
وَقَضَىٰ بَيْنَهُم بِالْقِسْطِ  
وَهُمْ لَا يَظْلُمُونَ ○

55. Is it not (the case) that to God  
Belongeth whatever is  
In the heavens and on earth?  
Is it not (the case) that  
God's promise is assuredly true?  
Yet most of them understand not.

هـ-الْأَرَانِ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ  
الْأَرَانِ وَعَدَ اللّٰهُ حَقًّا  
وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ○

56. It is He who giveth life  
And who taketh it,  
And to Him shall ye  
All be brought back.

هـ-هُوَ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ  
وَالِيَهُ تُرْجَعُونَ ○

57. Oh mankind! there hath come  
To you a direction from your Lord  
And a healing for the (diseases) <sup>1446</sup>  
In your hearts,—and for those  
Who believe, a Guidance  
And a Mercy.

هـ-يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ مَوْعِظَةٌ  
مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَشِفَاءٌ لِّمَا فِي الصُّدُورِ  
وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ○

58. Say: "In the Bounty of God  
And in His Mercy,—in that  
Let them rejoice": that is better  
Than the (wealth) they hoard.

هـ-قُلْ بِفَضْلِ اللّٰهِ وَبِرَحْمَتِهِ فَبِذَلِكَ  
فَلْيَفْرَحُوا هُوَ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا يَكْتُمُونَ ○

59. Say: "See ye what things <sup>1447</sup>  
God hath sent down

هـ-قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ مَا أَنزَلَ اللّٰهُ

1445. *Declare their repentance*: the verb in the original is *asarrū*, which may mean either "declare" or "reveal" or else "conceal" or "hide". The classical Commentators are divided as to the meaning to be adopted here. If the first, which I prefer, the sense would be: "When the Penalty stares the sinners in the face, they would give anything to escape it, and they would even openly declare their repentance, which would be a source of shame and ignominy to them." If the latter meaning be taken, the sense would be: "They would give anything to escape the Penalty; but the hardest thing of all for them is frankly to confess and repent, and so they conceal their sense of shame and ignominy."

1446. Those who do wrong have a disease in their hearts, which will cause their spiritual death. God in His Mercy declares His Will to them, which should direct their lives and provide a healing for their spiritual disease. If they accept Faith, the remedy acts; they find themselves in right guidance and receive God's forgiveness and mercy. Surely those are far better gifts than material advantages, wealth, or possessions.

1447. "Sustenance" is to be taken in both the literal and the metaphorical sense. In the literal sense, what fine and varied things God has provided for us on land and in sea and air, in the vegetable, animal, and mineral kingdoms? Yet narrow minds put artificial barriers against their use. In the metaphorical sense, what enchanting fields of knowledge and spiritual endeavour are provided in our individual and social lives? And who is to say that some are lawful and others forbidden? Supposing they were so in special circumstances, it is not right to attribute artificial restrictions of that kind to God and falsely erect religious sanctions against them.

For your sustenance? Yet ye  
Hold forbidden some things  
Thereof and (some things) lawful."  
Say: "Hath God indeed  
Permitted you, or do ye invent  
(Things) to attribute to God?"

لَكُمْ مِنْ رِزْقٍ فَجَعَلْتُمْ مِنْهُ حَرَامًا وَ  
حَلَالًا قُلِ اللَّهُ أَوْزَنَ لَكُمْ  
أَمْرَ عَلَى اللَّهِ تَقْتَرُونَ ○

60. And what think those  
Who invent lies against God  
Of the Day of Judgment? <sup>1448</sup>  
Verily God is full of Bounty  
To mankind, but most  
Of them are ungrateful. <sup>1449</sup>

وَمَا ظَنُّ الَّذِينَ يَفْتَرُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ  
الْكَذِبَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَذُو فَضْلٍ  
عَلَى النَّاسِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَشْكُرُونَ ○

### SECTION 7.

61. In whatever business thou  
Mayest be, and whatever portion  
Thou mayest be reciting  
From the Qurān,—and whatever  
Deed ye (mankind) may be doing,—  
We are Witnesses thereof  
When ye are deeply engrossed  
Therein. Nor is hidden  
From thy Lord (so much as)  
The weight of an atom  
On the earth or in heaven.  
And not the least  
And not the greatest  
Of these things but are recorded  
In a clear Record. <sup>1450</sup>

وَمَا تَكُونُ فِي شَأْنٍ  
وَمَا تَتْلُوا مِنْهُ مِنْ قُرْآنٍ  
وَلَا تَسْمَعُونَ مِنْ عَمَلٍ إِلَّا لَنَا عَلَيْكُمْ  
شُهُودٌ إِذْ تُفْعَضُونَ فِيهِ  
وَمَا يَعْزُبُ عَنْ رَبِّكَ مِنْ مِثْقَالٍ ذَرَّةٍ  
فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي السَّمَاءِ  
وَلَا أَصْغَرَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ وَلَا أَكْبَرَ  
إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ ○

62. Behold! verily on the friends  
Of God there is no fear, <sup>1451</sup>

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَخَوْفُوا عَلَيْهِمْ

1448. People who lie in Religion or invent false gods, or false worship,—have they any idea of the Day of Judgment, when they will be called to account, and will have to answer for their deeds?

1449. God is most kind, and gracious, and generous with His gifts of all kinds, material and spiritual. But men do not understand, and are ungrateful in forgetting the Giver of all and setting up false objects of worship and false standards of pride.

1450. There is nothing that men can do but God is a witness to it. We may be deeply engrossed in some particular thing and for the time being be quite unconscious of other things. But God's knowledge not only comprehends all things, but has all things actively before it. Nothing is hidden from Him. And His knowledge has another quality which human knowledge has not. Human knowledge is subject to time, and is obliterated by time. God's knowledge is like a Record and endures for ever. And His Record has a further quality which human records have not. The most permanent human record may be quite intelligible to those who make it but may be ambiguous to others and may become unintelligible with the progress of time, as happens almost invariably to the most enduring inscriptions from very ancient times: but in God's "Record" or knowledge there is no ambiguity, for it is independent of time, or place, or circumstance. This is the force of *Mubīn* here.

1451. God's all-embracing knowledge and constant watchful care over all His creatures, may be a source of fear to sinners, but there is no fear for those whom He honours with His love and friendship,—neither in this world nor in the world to come.

Nor shall they grieve;

63. Those who believe  
And (constantly) guard  
Against evil;—

64. For them are Glad Tidings,  
In the life of the Present  
And in the Hereafter:  
No change can there be  
In the Words of God.  
This is indeed  
The supreme Felicity.

65. Let not their speech<sup>1452</sup>  
Grieve thee: for all power  
And honour belong to God:  
It is He Who heareth  
And knoweth (all things).

66. Behold! verily to God  
Belong all creatures,  
In the heavens and on earth.  
What do they follow  
Who worship as His "partners"  
Other than God? They follow  
Nothing but fancy, and  
They do nothing but lie.<sup>1453</sup>

67. He it is that hath  
Made you the Night  
That ye may rest therein,  
And the Day to make  
Things visible (to you).<sup>1454</sup>  
Verily in this are Signs  
For those who listen  
(To His Message).

وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

٦٣- الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَكَانُوا يَتَّقُونَ

٦٤- لَهُمُ الْبُشْرَىٰ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا

وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ

لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِكَلِمَاتِ اللَّهِ

ذَٰلِكَ هُوَ الْقَوْرُ الْعَظِيمُ

٦٥- وَلَا يَحْزَنكَ قَوْلُهُمْ

إِنَّ الْعِزَّةَ لِلَّهِ جَمِيعًا

هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ

٦٦- أَلَا إِنَّ لِلَّهِ مِنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَنْ

فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا يَبْهَةِ الَّذِينَ يُدْعُونَ

مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ شُرَكَاءَ إِنَّ يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا

الظَّنَّ وَإِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَخْرُصُونَ

٦٧- هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ اللَّيْلَ

لِتَسْكُنُوا فِيهِ وَالنَّهَارَ مُبْصِرًا

إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ

لِقَوْمٍ يَسْمَعُونَ

1452. Sometimes the words of the unrighteous or their revilings hurt or grieve the righteous man, but there is no occasion for either anger or sorrow: they have no power and they can do no real dishonour, for all power and honour are from God.

1453. All creatures are subject to God. If, therefore, any false worship is set up, the false gods—so-called "partners"—are merely creatures of imagination or false inventions.

1454. Our physical life—and our higher life in so far as it is linked with the physical—is sustained by the alternation of rest and activity, and the fit environment for this alternation is the succession of Nights and Days in our physical world. The Day makes the things "visible to us"—a beautiful symbol, not only of the physical work for which we go about by day, but of the higher activities which are fitly associated with seeing, perception, and enquiry. Intuition (insight) is a little out of that circle, because that may come by night, when our other faculties are resting.

68. **And** they say, "God hath begotten A son!"—Glory be to Him! He is Self-Sufficient! His Are all things in the heavens And on earth! No warrant Have ye for this! Say ye About God what ye know not?

69. Say: "Those who invent A lie against God Will never prosper."<sup>1455</sup>

70. A little enjoyment In this world!— And then, to Us Will be their return. Then shall We make them Taste the severest Penalty For their blasphemies.

٦٨ قَالُوا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ وَلَدًا سُبْحَنَهُ

هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي

الْاَرْضِ اِنْ عِنْدَكُمْ مِنْ سُلْطٰنٍ بِهٰذَا

اَتَقُولُوْنَ عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ۝

٦٩ قُلْ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَفْتَرُوْنَ عَلَى اللَّهِ

الْكُذِبَ لَا يَفْلِحُوْنَ ۝

٧٠ مَتَاعٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا ثُمَّ اِلَيْنَا مَرْجِعُهُمْ

ثُمَّ نُنْزِلُ لَهُمُ الْعَذَابَ الشَّدِيدَ

۝ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَكْفُرُوْنَ ۝

#### C. 102.—God works in His world—in mercy

- (x. 71-92.) For His servants, and in just punishment  
For those who do wrong. Thus was it  
In Noah's story, for he worked unselfishly  
For his people, though rejected of them.  
So was it with Moses : he preached  
To Pharaoh and the Egyptians, but most  
Of them preferred falsehood and pride  
To the Truth of God, and perished. Even  
Pharaoh's confession of God at the last  
Was too late, as his life had been spent  
In luxury, pride, and oppression.

#### SECTION 8.

71. **Relate** to them the story<sup>1456</sup>  
Of Noah. Behold! he said  
To his People: "Oh my People,  
If it be hard on your (mind)

٧١ وَاٰتِلْ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَا نُوحٍ اِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ

يَقُومُوا اِنْ كَانَ كَبُرَ عَلَيْكُمْ

1455. In Quranic language "prosperity" refers both to our every day life and to the higher life within us,—to the Present and the Future,—health and strength, opportunities and resources, a spirit of contentment, and the power of influencing others. Here there seems to be an extra touch of meaning. A liar not only deprives himself of prosperity in all senses, but his "lie" itself against God will not succeed: it will and must be found out.

1456. The reference to Noah's story here is only incidental, to illustrate a special point. The fuller story will be found in xi. 25-48, and in many other passages, e.g., vii. 59-64, xxiii. 23-32, xxvi. 105-122, and xxxvii. 75-82. At each place there is a special point in the context. The special point here is that Noah's very life and preaching among his wicked people was a cause of offence to them. But he feared nothing, trusted in God, delivered his message, and was saved from the Flood.

That I should stay (with you)  
And commemorate the Signs  
Of God,—yet I put  
My trust in God.  
Get ye then an agreement  
About your plan and among  
Your Partners, so your plan <sup>1457</sup>  
Be not to you dark and dubious.  
Then pass your sentence on me,  
And give me no respite.

72. "But if ye turn back, (consider):  
No reward have I asked <sup>1458</sup>  
Of you: my reward is only  
Due from God, and I  
Have been commanded to be  
Of those who submit  
To God's Will (in Islam)."

73. They rejected him,  
But We delivered him,  
And those with him,  
In the Ark, and We made  
Them inherit (the earth),  
While We overwhelmed  
In the Flood those  
Who rejected Our Signs. <sup>1459</sup>  
Then see what was the end  
Of those who were warned  
(But heeded not)!

74. Then after him We sent  
(Many) apostles to their Peoples:  
They brought them Clear Signs,  
But they would not believe  
What they had already rejected <sup>1460</sup>

مَقَامِي وَتَذَكِّرُنِي بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ  
فَعَلَى اللَّهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ  
فَاَجْمِعُوا أَمْرَكُمْ وَشُرَكَاءَكُمْ  
ثُمَّ لَا يَكُنْ أَمْرُكُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ غُمَّةً  
ثُمَّ اقْضُوا إِلَيَّ وَلَا تُنظِرُونِ ○

٤٢- فَإِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَمَا سَأَلْتُكُمْ مِنْ أَجْرٍ  
إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى اللَّهِ  
وَأُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ ○

٤٣- فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَجَعَلْنَاهُ  
وَمَنْ مَعَهُ فِي الْفُلْكِ  
وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ خُلَفَاءَ  
وَاعْرِفْنَا الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا  
فَانْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ ○

٤٤- ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَا مِنْهُ بَعْدَهُ رُسُلًا إِلَى قَوْمِهِمْ  
فَجَاءُواهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ  
فَمَا كَانُوا لِيُؤْمِنُوا بِهَا كَذَّبُوا بِهَا مِنْ

1457. Firm in his sense of Truth from God, Noah plainly told his people to condemn him to death if they liked, openly and in concert, so that he should at least know who would listen to his Message and who would not. He wanted them to be frank and direct, for he feared nothing

1458. The man of God preaches for the good of his people. But he claims no reward for them, but on the contrary is reviled, persecuted, banished, and often slain

1459. Cf. vii. 64.

1460. I understand the meaning to be that there is a sort of spiritual influence descending from generation to generation, among the Unbelievers as among the men of Faith. In history we find the same spiritual problems in many ages,—denial of God's grace, defiance of God's law, rejection of God's Message. These influences cause the hearts of the contumacious to be sealed and impervious to the Truth. Cf. ii. 7 and notes. What they do is to prejudice the issues even before the Prophet explains them.



Beforehand. Thus do We seal  
The hearts of the transgressors.

75. **فَإِذَا** When after them sent We  
Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh <sup>1461</sup>  
And his chiefs with Our Signs.  
But they were arrogant:  
They were a people in sin.
76. When the Truth did come  
To them from Us, they said:  
"This is evident sorcery!"
77. Said Moses: "Say ye (this)  
About the Truth when  
It hath (actually) reached you?  
Is sorcery (like) this?  
But sorcerers will not prosper." <sup>1462</sup>
78. They said: "Hast thou  
Come to us to turn us  
Away from the ways  
We found our fathers following,—  
In order that thou and thy brother  
May have greatness in the land? <sup>1463</sup>  
But not we shall believe in you!"
79. Said Pharaoh: "Bring me  
Every sorcerer well versed."
80. When the sorcerers came,  
Moses said to them:  
"Throw ye what ye (wish)  
To throw!"

قَبْلَ كَذَلِكَ تَطْبَعُ عَلَى قُلُوبِ الْمُعْتَدِينَ ○

٤٥- ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِم مُوسَى وَ  
هَارُونَ إِلَى فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَئِهِ بِآيَاتِنَا  
فَاسْتَكْبَرُوا وَكَانُوا قَوْمًا مُجْرِمِينَ ○

٤٦- فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ عِنْدِنَا  
قَالُوا إِنَّ هَذَا لَسِحْرٌ مُبِينٌ ○

٤٧- قَالَ مُوسَى أَتَقُولُونَ لِلْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ  
أَسِحْرٌ هَذَا  
وَلَا يُفْلِحُ السَّاحِرُونَ ○

٤٨- قَالُوا اجْعَلْنَا مِثْلَهُنَّ إِنَّا وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْنَهُ  
آيَاتِنَا وَكَانُوا لَكُمْ آلِكِبْرِيَاءَ فِي  
الْأَرْضِ  
وَمَا نَحْنُ لَكُمْ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ ○

٤٩- وَقَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ أَتُونِي بِكُلِّ سَاحِرٍ عَلِيمٍ ○

٥٠- فَلَمَّا جَاءَ السَّاحِرَةُ قَالَتْ لَهُمْ مُوسَى  
الْقُوا مَا أَنْتُمْ مُلْقُونَ ○

1461. The story of Moses, Aaron, and Pharaoh is fully told in vii. 103-137, and there are references to it in many places in the Qurān. The incidental reference here is to illustrate a special point, viz., that the wicked are arrogant and bound up in their sin, and prefer deception to Truth: they do not hesitate to charge the men of God, who work unselfishly for them, with mean motives, such as would actuate them in similar circumstances!

1462. Sorcery is the very opposite of Truth,—being deception or plausible shows by the powers of evil. But these cannot succeed or last permanently, and Truth must ultimately prevail.

1463. Notice how they attribute evil motives to the men of God, motives of ambition and lust of power, which the men of God had been sent expressly to put down. The same device was used against Muṣṭafa.

81. When they had had their throw,
- <sup>1464</sup>

Moses said: "What ye  
Have brought is sorcery:  
God will surely make it  
Of no effect: for God  
Prospereth not the work  
Of those who make mischief.

۞ فَلَمَّا أَلْقَوْا قَالَ مُوسَى  
مَا جِئْتُمْ بِهِ السِّحْرُ  
إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَيَجْلُتُهُ  
إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَصْلُحُ عَمَلُ الْمُفْسِدِينَ ۝

82. "And God by His Words
- <sup>1465</sup>

Doth prove and establish  
His Truth, however much  
The Sinners may hate it!"

۞ وَيُحَقِّقُ اللَّهُ الْحَقَّ بِكَلِمَاتِهِ  
وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْجَاهِلُونَ ۝

## SECTION 9.

83. But none believed in Moses
- 
- Except some children of his

People,<sup>1466</sup>

Because of the fear of Pharaoh  
And his chiefs, lest they  
Should persecute them; and

Pharaoh was mighty on the earth  
And one who transgressed all  
bounds.

۞ فَمَا آمَنَ لِمُوسَى إِلَّا ذُرِّيَّةٌ مِّنْ  
قَوْمِهِ عَلَى خَوْفٍ مِّنْ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَئِهِمْ  
أَن يَفْتِنَهُمْ  
وَإِنَّ فِرْعَوْنَ لَعَالٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ  
وَإِنَّهُ لَكِن الْمُسْرِفِينَ ۝

84. Moses said: "Oh my People!

If ye do (really) believe  
In God, then in Him  
Put your trust if ye  
Submit (your will to His)."

۞ وَقَالَ مُوسَى يَقُولُونَ كُنْتُمْ أَتُؤْمِنُونَ  
بِاللَّهِ فَعَلَيْكُمْ  
تَوَكَّلُوا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُسْلِمِينَ ۝

85. They said: "In God
- 
- Do we put our trust.

۞ فَقَالُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ تَوَكَّلْنَا ۝

1464. When they threw their rods, the rods became snakes by a trick of sorcery, but Moses's miracles were greater than any tricks of sorcery, and had real Truth behind them.

1465. God's Words or Commands have real power, while sorcerers' tricks only seem wonderful by deceiving the eye.

1466. The pronoun "his" in "his People" is taken by some Commentators to refer to Pharaoh. The majority of Pharaoh's people refused to believe at the time, but the sorcerers believed (vii. 120), and so did Pharaoh's wife (lxvi. 11), and ultimately Pharaoh himself, though too late (x. 90). If we took "his" to refer to Moses, it would mean that the Israelites were hard-hearted and grumbled (vii. 129) even when they were being delivered from Egypt, and only a few of them had any real faith in God's providence and the working of His Law, and they feared Pharaoh even more than they feared God.

Our Lord ! make us not  
A trial for those <sup>1467</sup>  
Who practise oppression;

86. " And deliver us by Thy Mercy  
From those who reject (Thee)."

87. **W**e inspired Moses and his  
brother  
With this Message: " Provide <sup>1468</sup>  
Dwellings for your People  
In Egypt, make your dwellings  
Into places of worship,  
And establish regular prayers :  
And give Glad Tidings  
To those who believe! "

88. Moses prayed: " Our Lord !  
Thou hast indeed bestowed  
On Pharaoh and his Chiefs  
Splendour and wealth in the life <sup>1469</sup>  
Of the Present, and so,  
Our Lord, they mislead (men)  
From Thy Path. Deface,  
Our Lord, the features of their  
wealth, <sup>1470</sup>  
And send hardness to their hearts,  
So they will not believe

رَبَّنَا لَا تَجْعَلْنَا فِتْنَةً لِّلْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ٥

٨٦- وَنَجِّنَا بِرَحْمَتِكَ مِّنَ الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ ٥

٨٧- وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ وَأَخِيهِ  
أَن تَبْنُوا لِقَوْمِكُمَا بِمِصْرَ بُيُوتًا وَأَجْعَلُوا  
بُيُوتَكُمْ قِبْلَةً  
وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ  
وَآذِّنُوا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ٥

٨٨- وَقَالَ مُوسَىٰ رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ آتَيْتَ  
فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَآئِهِ زِينَةً وَأَمْوَالًا فِي الْحَيَاةِ  
الدُّنْيَا  
رَبَّنَا أَخْرِجْنَا مِنْ هَٰذَا  
رَبَّنَا اطْمِسْ عَلَىٰ أَمْوَالِهِمْ  
وَأَشْدُدْ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ فَلَا يُؤْمِنُوا

1467. A trial for those who practise oppression: the various meanings of *Fitnat* have been explained in n. 1198 to viii. 25. The prayer is that the righteous people, being weak, should be saved from being used as objects of oppression or punishment at the hands of powerful enemies. Weakness tempts Power to practise oppression, and is thus an occasion of trial for the oppressors.

1468. This instruction, we may suppose, was given when the sorcerers were brought to confusion, and some of the Egyptians believed. Moses was for a little while to remain in Egypt, so that his Message should have time to work, before the Israelites were led out of Egypt. They were to make their houses into places of prayer (*Qibla*), as Pharaoh would not probably allow them to set up public places of prayer, and they were now to be only sojourners in Egypt. The *Qibla* was to be symbolical of their later wanderings in Arabia, and the still later restoration of God's pure worship at the Ka'ba under Muḥammad. These were the glad tidings (the Gospel) of Islam, which was preached under Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, and completed under Muḥammad.

1469. Moses's prayer, in which Aaron joined, for he was always with him, may be paraphrased thus: " Oh God ! we understand that the glitter and the wealth of the Egyptians are not to be envied. They are but the ephemeral goods of this life. They are a disadvantage, in that in their pride of possessions the Egyptians mislead themselves and others. Let their pride be their undoing ! Turn their wealth into bitterness and their hearts into hardness, for they reject Thee, and they will not believe until they actually see the Punishment of their sins ! "

1470. A terrible curse ! Let their wealth and splendour become so defaced in their features, that instead of being objects of desire, they become objects of loathing ! The heart is the seat of affections and joy : let it be so hardened by their unbelief that it becomes the seat of hatred and grief ! It is when they see the Penalty that they will believe !

Until they see  
The grievous Penalty."

89. God said : " Accepted is  
Your prayer (oh Moses and Aaron) !  
So stand ye straight,  
And follow not the path  
Of those who know not." <sup>1471</sup>

90. ~~We~~ We took the Children  
Of Israel across the sea :  
Pharaoh and his hosts followed them  
In insolence and spite. <sup>1472</sup>  
At length, when overwhelmed  
With the flood, he said :  
" I believe there is no god  
Except Him Whom the Children  
Of Israel believe in : <sup>1473</sup>  
I am of those who submit  
(To God in Islām)."

91. (It was said to him :)  
" Ah now !—But a little while  
Before, wast thou in rebellion !—  
And thou didst mischief (and  
violence) !

92. " This day shall We save thee  
In thy body, that thou  
Mayest be a Sign to those  
Who come after thee !  
But verily, many among mankind  
Are heedless of Our Signs ! "

حَتَّى يَرَوْا الْعَذَابَ الْأَلِيمَ ۝

٨٩- قَالَ قَدْ أُجِيبَتِ دَعْوَتُكُمَا فَاسْتَقِيمَا  
وَلَا تَتَّبِعِينَ سَبِيلَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ۝

٩٠- وَجَاوَزْنَا بِبَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ الْبَحْرَ  
فَاتَّبَعَهُمْ فِرْعَوْنُ وَجُنُودُهُ بَغْيًا وَعُدْوَانًا  
حَتَّى إِذَا أَدْرَكَهُ الْعَرَقُ  
قَالَ آمَنْتُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا  
الَّذِي آمَنْتُ بِهِ بَنُو إِسْرَءِيلَ  
وَأَنَا مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ ۝

٩١- آتَيْنَا وَقَدْ عَصَيْتَ قَبْلُ  
وَكُنْتَ مِنَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ ۝

٩٢- قَالَ يَوْمَ نُنَجِّكَ بِجَدِّكَ لِتَكُونَ  
لِمَنْ خَلَقَكَ آيَةً ۚ وَإِنْ كَثِيرٌ مِّنَ  
النَّاسِ عَنِ آيَاتِنَا لَغَفُلُونَ ۝

C. 103.- God's purpose of Mercy and Forgiveness  
(x. 93-109) Was shown in the mission of Jonah, when  
Nineveh was pardoned on repentance, and given  
A new lease of life. We must

1471. Be not dazzled by their splendour, but stand out straight for Truth, for that is your salvation ! Addressed in turn to Moses and Aaron, in substance it is addressed to the Israelites.

1472. Notice the swiftness of the action in the narrative. The execution of poetic justice could not have been described in fewer words.

1473. That is, in the One True God. This was death-bed repentance, and even so it was forced by the terror of the catastrophe. So it was not accepted (cf. iv. 18) in its entirety. Only this concession was made, that the body was saved from the sea, and presumably, according to Egyptian custom, it was embalmed and the mummy was given due rites of the dead. But the story commemorated for ever God's working, in mercy for His people, and in just punishment of oppressors.

Be patient and strive with constancy and perseverance,  
For all suffering and sorrow as well as  
All bounties proceed from God, Whose plan  
Is righteous and for the good of His creatures.

## SECTION 10.

93. **W**e settled the Children  
Of Israel in a beautiful <sup>1474</sup>  
Dwelling-place, and provided  
For them sustenance of the best :  
It was after knowledge had been  
Granted to them, that they  
Fell into schisms. Verily  
God will judge between them  
As to the schisms amongst them,  
On the Day of Judgment.

٩٣- وَلَقَدْ بَوَّأْنَا بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ مَبْوَا  
صَدَقٍ وَرَزَقْنَاهُمْ مِنْ الطَّيِّبَاتِ  
فَمَا اخْتَلَفُوا حَتَّى جَاءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ  
إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَفْضِي بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ  
فِي مَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ ○

94. If thou wert in doubt  
As to what We have revealed  
Unto thee, then ask those  
Who have been reading  
The Book from before thee : <sup>1475</sup>  
The Truth hath indeed come  
To thee from thy Lord :  
So be in no wise  
Of those in doubt. <sup>1476</sup>

٩٤- فَإِنْ كُنْتَ فِي شَكٍّ مِمَّا أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ  
فَسْأَلِ الَّذِينَ يَفْقَهُونَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْ  
قَبْلِكَ  
لَقَدْ جَاءَكَ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ  
فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِينَ ○

95. Nor be of those who reject  
The Signs of God,  
Or thou shalt be of those  
Who perish.

٩٥- وَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِ  
اللَّهِ فَتَكُونُونَ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ ○

96. **T**hose against whom the Word  
Of thy Lord hath been verified <sup>1477</sup>

٩٦- إِنَّ الَّذِينَ حَقَّتْ عَلَيْهِمْ كَلِمَةُ رَبِّكَ

1474. After many wanderings the Israelites were settled in the land of Canaan, described as "a land flowing with milk and honey" (Exod. iii. 8). They had a prosperous land; and they were supplied with spiritual sustenance by men sent to deliver God's Message. They should have known better than to fall into disputes and schisms, but they did so. This was all the more inexcusable considering what bounties they had received from God. The schisms arose from selfish arrogance, and God will judge between them on the Day of Judgment.

1475. God's Truth is all one, and even in different forms men sincere in Religion recognise the oneness. So sincere Jews like 'Abdullāh ibn Salam, and sincere Christians like Waraqa or the Nestorian monk Bahira, were ready to recognise the mission of Muḥammad Muḥafā. "The Book" in this connection is Revelation generally, including pre-Islamic revelations.

1476. Cf. iii, 60 and n. 60.

1477. God has given frequent warnings against Evil and want of Faith in all ages, through Signs and through inspiration,—the latter ("the Word") being even more direct and personal than the former. Those who did not heed the warning found to their cost that it was true, and they perished. Such contumacy in the rejection of Truth only yields when the actual penalty is in sight. Belief then is induced by irresistible facts: it is not efficacious as Faith, as was proved against Pharaoh. See x. 90 and n. 1473.

Would not believe—

97. Even if every Sign was brought  
Unto them,—until they see  
(For themselves) the Penalty  
Grievous.

98. Why was there not  
A single township (among those  
We warned), which believed,—  
So its Faith should have  
Profited it,—except the People <sup>1478</sup>  
Of Jonas ? When they believed,  
We removed from them  
The Penalty of Ignominy  
In the life of the Present,  
And permitted them to enjoy  
(Their life) for a while. <sup>1479</sup>

99. If it had been thy Lord's Will,  
They would all have believed,—  
All who are on earth !  
Wilt thou then compel mankind,

لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ۝

۹۷- وَلَوْ جَاءَهُمْ كُلُّ آيَةٍ  
حَتَّى يَرَوْا الْعَذَابَ الْأَلِيمَ ۝

۹۸- فَلَوْلَا كَانَتْ قَرْيَةٌ  
أَمَنَتْ فَتَنْفَعَهَا إِيْمَانُهَا إِلَّا قَوْمَ  
يُونُسَ ۚ  
لَنَّا أَمْنُوْا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُمْ عَذَابَ الْخُزْيِ  
فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا  
وَمَتَّعْنَاهُمْ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ ۝

۹۹- وَلَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّكَ لَأَمَنَّ مِنَ فِي الْأَرْضِ  
كُلَّهُمْ جَمِيعًا ۖ أَفَأَنْتَ تُكْرِهُ النَّاسَ

1478. God in His infinite Mercy points out the contumacy of Sin as a warning, and the exceptional case of Nineveh and its Prophet Jonas is alluded to. The story of Jonas is told in xxxvii. 139-148, which would be an appropriate place for further comments. Here it is sufficient to note that Nineveh was a very ancient town which is now no longer on the map. Its site is believed to be marked by the two mounds on the left bank of the Tigris, opposite the flourishing city of Mosul on the right bank, about 230 miles north-north-west of Bagdād. One of the mounds bears the name of "the Tomb of Nabī Yūnus." Archaeologists have not yet fully explored its antiquities. But it is clear that it was a very old Sumerian town, perhaps older than 3500 B.C. It became the capital of Assyria. The first Assyrian Empire under Shalmanesser I, about 1300 B.C., became the supreme power in Western Asia. Babylon, whose tributary Assyria had formerly been, now became tributary to Assyria. The second Assyrian Empire arose about 745 B.C., and Sennacherib (705-681 B.C.) beautified the town with many Public Works. It was destroyed by the Scythians (so-called Medes) in 612 B.C. If the date of Jonah were assumed to be about 800 B.C., it would be between the First and the Second Assyrian Empire; when the City was nearly destroyed for its sins, but on account of its repentance was given a new lease of glorious life in the Second Empire.

1479. The point of the allusion here may be thus explained. Nineveh was a great and glorious City. But it became, like Babylon, a city of sin. God sent the prophet Yūnus (Jonah) to warn it. Full of iniquities though it was, it listened to the warning, perhaps in the person of a few just men. For their sakes, the All-Merciful God spared it, and gave it a new lease of glorious life. According to the chronology in the last note the new lease would be for about two centuries, after which it perished completely for its sins and abominations. Note that its new lease of life was for its collective life as a City, the life of the Present, i.e., of this World. It does not mean that individual sinners escaped the spiritual consequences of their sin, unless they individually repented and obtained God's mercy and forgiveness.

Against their will, to believe!<sup>1480</sup>

100. No soul can believe, except  
By the Will of God,<sup>1481</sup>  
And He will place Doubt<sup>1482</sup>  
(Or obscurity) on those  
Who will not understand.

101. Say: "Behold all that is  
In the heavens and on earth";  
But neither Signs nor Warners  
Profit those who believe not.<sup>1483</sup>

102. Do they then expect  
(Any thing) but (what happened  
In) the days of the men  
Who passed away before them?  
Say: "Wait ye then:  
For I, too, will wait with you."<sup>1484</sup>

حَتَّىٰ يَكُونُوا مُؤْمِنِينَ ۝

۱۰۰- وَمَا كَانَ لِنَفْسٍ أَنْ تُؤْمِنَ إِلَّا  
بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ يَجْعَلُ الرِّجْسَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ  
لَا يَعْقِلُونَ ۝

۱۰۱- قُلْ انْظُرُوا مَاذَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَ  
الْأَرْضِ وَمَا تُعْنِي الْآيَاتُ وَالنُّذُرُ  
عَنْ قَوْمٍ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ۝

۱۰۲- قُلْ لَيْسَ لَكُم مِّنْ أَمْرِ  
الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِن قَبْلِهِمْ قُلٌّ فَانْظُرُوا  
إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ مِنَ الْمُنْتَظِرِينَ ۝

1480. If it had been God's Plan or Will not to grant the limited Free-will that He has granted to man, His omnipotence could have made all mankind alike: all would then have had Faith, but that Faith would have reflected no merit on them. In the actual world as it is, man has been endowed with various faculties and capacities, so that he should strive and explore, and bring himself into harmony with God's Will. Here Faith becomes a moral achievement, and to resist Faith becomes a sin. As a complementary proposition, men of Faith must not be impatient or angry if they have to contend against Unfaith, and most important of all, they must guard against the temptation of forcing Faith, *i. e.*, imposing it on others by physical compulsion, or any other forms of compulsion such as social pressure, or inducements held out by wealth or position, or other adventitious advantages. Forced faith is no faith. They should strive spiritually and let God's Plan work as He wills.

1481. To creatures endued with Will, Faith comes out of an active use of that Will. But we must not be so arrogant as to suppose that that is enough. At best man is weak, and is in need of God's grace and help. If we sincerely wish to understand, He will help our Faith; but if not, our doubts and difficulties will only be increased. This follows as a necessary consequence, and in Quranic language all consequences are ascribed to God, the Cause of Causes.

1482. *Rijs* (from *rajisa*, *yarjasu*, or *rajusa*, *yarjusu*) has various meanings: *e.g.* (1) filth, impurity, uncleanness, abomination, as in ix. 95; (2) hence, filthy deeds, foul conduct, crime, abomination, thus shading off into (1), as in v. 93; (3) hence punishment for crime, penalty, as in vi. 125; (4) a form of such punishment, *viz.*, doubt, obscurity, or unsettlement of mind, anger, indignation, as in ix. 125, and here, but perhaps the idea of punishment is also implied here.

1483. If Faith results from an active exertion of our spiritual faculties or understanding, it follows that if we let these die, God's Signs in His Creation or in the spoken Word which comes by inspiration through the mouths of His Messengers will not reach us any more than music reaches a deaf man.

1484. *Cf.* x. 20 and n. 1408. The argument about God's revelation of Himself to man was begun in those early sections of this Sūra and is being now rounded off towards the end of this Sūra with the same formula.

103. In the end We deliver  
Our apostles and those who  
believe:  
Thus is it fitting on Our part  
That We should deliver  
Those who believe!

۱۰۳- ثُمَّ نُنَجِّي رُسُلَنَا وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا  
كَذَلِكَ  
حَقًّا عَلَيْنَا نُنَجِّ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ۝

## SECTION 11.

104. Say: "Oh ye men!  
If ye are in doubt  
As to my religion, (behold!)<sup>1485</sup>  
I worship not what ye  
Worship, other than God!  
But I worship God—  
Who will take your souls<sup>1486</sup>  
(At death): I am commanded<sup>1487</sup>  
To be (in the ranks)  
Of the Believers,<sup>1488</sup>

۱۰۴- قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِن كُنْتُمْ فِي  
شَكٍّ مِنْ دِينِي فَلَا أَعْبُدُ الَّذِينَ  
تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ  
وَلَكِنْ أَعْبُدُ اللَّهَ الَّذِي يَتَوَقَّعُكُمْ  
وَأُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ ۝

105. "And further (thus): 'set thy face  
Towards Religion with true piety,  
And never in any wise  
Be of the Unbelievers;

۱۰۵- وَأَنْ أَقِمَّ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا  
وَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ۝

106. "Nor call on any,  
Other than God;—  
Such will neither profit thee  
Nor hurt thee: if thou dost,  
Behold! thou shalt certainly  
Be of those who do wrong."

۱۰۶- وَلَا تَدْعُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ  
مَا لَا يَنْفَعُكَ وَلَا يَضُرُّكَ  
فَإِنْ فَعَلْتَ فَإِنَّكَ إِذَا قَرِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ۝

107. If God do touch thee  
With hurt, there is none  
Can remove it but He:  
If He do design some benefit

۱۰۷- وَإِنْ يَمَسَّكَ اللَّهُ بِضُرٍّ فَلَا كَاشِفَ  
لَهُ إِلَّا هُوَ وَإِنْ يُرِدْكَ بِخَيْرٍ

1485. Other people may hesitate, or doubt, or wonder. But the righteous man has no doubt in his own mind, and he declares his Faith clearly and unambiguously to all, as did Muḥammad.

1486. The worship of the One and True God is not a fancy worship, to be arrived at merely by reasoning and philosophy. It touches the vital issues of life and death—which are in His hands and His alone.

1487. Nor is the worship of One God an invention of the Prophet. It comes as a direct command, through him and to all.

1488. Individual Faith is good, but it is completed and strengthened by joining or forming a Righteous Society, in which the individual can develop and expand. Islam was never a religion of monks and anchorites. It laid great stress on social duties, which in many ways test the individual's character.



For thee, there is none  
Can keep back His favour :  
He causeth it to reach  
Whomsoever of His servants  
He pleaseth. And He is  
The Oft-Forgiving, Most  
Merciful.<sup>1489</sup>

فَلَا رَآكَ لِفَضْلِهِ  
يُصِيبُ بِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ  
وَهُوَ الْعَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ ۝

108. Say : " Oh ye men ! Now  
Truth hath reached you  
From your Lord ! Those who  
receive  
Guidance, do so for the good  
Of their own souls ; those  
Who stray, do so to their own loss :  
And I am not (set) over you  
To arrange your affairs."<sup>1490</sup>

۝۱۰۸ قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ الْحَقُّ  
مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَمَنِ اهْتَدَى  
فَأَنفُسًا يَهْتَدِي لِنَفْسِهِ  
وَمَنْ ضَلَّ فَإِنَّمَا يَجْعَلُ عَلَيْهَا  
وَمَا أَنَا عَلَيْكُمْ بِوَكِيلٍ ۝

109. Follow thou the inspiration  
Sent unto thee, and be  
Patient and constant, till God  
Do decide : for He  
Is the Best to decide.<sup>1491</sup>

۝۱۰۹ وَالَّذِي مَّا يُؤْتَىٰ إِلَيْكَ  
وَاصْبِرْ حَتَّىٰ يَخْضَمَ اللَّهُ  
وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الْحَاكِمِينَ ۝



1489. God is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. Even when we suffer under trials and tribulations, it is for our good, and no one can remove them except He, when, in His Plan, he sees it to be for the best. On the other hand, there is no power that can intercept His blessings and favours, and His bounty flows freely when we are worthy, and often when we are not worthy of it.

1490. The *Furqān*, the Criterion between right and wrong, has been sent to us from God. If we accept guidance, it is not as if we confer favours on those who bring us guidance. They suffer unselfishly for us, in order that we may be guided for our own good. On the other hand, if we reject it, it is our own loss. We have a certain amount of free-will, and the responsibility is ours, and cannot be shifted to the Teachers sent by God.

1491. When, in spite of all the efforts of the men of God, people do not accept Truth, and evil seems to flourish for a time, we must wait and be patient, but at the same time we must not give up hope or persevering effort. For thus only can we carry out our part in the Plan of God.

## INTRODUCTION TO SŪRA XI (*Hūd*).

For the chronological place of this Sūra and the general argument of Sūras x to xv, see Introduction to S. x.

In subject-matter this Sūra supplements the preceding one. In the last Sūra stress was laid on that side of God's dealings with man which leans to Mercy: here stress is laid on the side which deals with justice and the punishment of Sin when all Grace is resisted.

### *Summary*

God's revelation of mercy, His dealings with man, and His long-suffering patience are contrasted with man's ingratitude, his love of falsehood and vanity, and his crookedness (xi. 1-24, and C. 104).

Noah's unselfishness and humility in teaching his people the Truth of God were traduced by the ungodly, and his Message ridiculed and rejected. But he built his Ark under directions from God, and was saved, with peace and blessings, while his rejecters perished (xi. 25-49, and C. 105).

The prophet Hūd preached to his people 'Ād against false gods, and the prophet Šālīḥ to his people Thamūd against dishonouring the symbol of God's bounty. In both cases God's Signs were rejected, and the rejecters were blotted out (xi. 50-68, and C. 106).

Lot's people were given to abominations: Abraham pleaded for them, and Lot was sent out to them, but they went deeper and deeper into sin and suffered the Penalty. Shu'aib's people, the Midianites, were warned against fraud and mischief, but they reproached him with helplessness and were themselves destroyed (xi. 69-95, and C. 107).

It is arrogant leaders like Pharaoh who mislead men, and men bring ruin on themselves. But God is Just. The penalty for sin is real and abiding; therefore shun all wrong-doing, and serve God whole-heartedly (xi. 96-123, and C. 108).

C. 104.—God's Revelation teaches the Truth: it warns  
(xi. 1-24.) Against wrong and gives glad tidings to the righteous:  
Ungrateful man folds up his heart  
And fails to see how all Nature points  
To God and to the Hereafter: he but seeks  
Petty issues, forgetting the Cause of Causes.  
Not all the wisdom of man can produce  
Aught like the Message which comes from God,  
As the Light that leads and the Mercy  
That forgives. Who then but will humble  
Himself before God, seeking His light and His voice?

## Sūra XI.

*Hud* (The Prophet Hud).*In the name of God, Most Gracious,  
Most Merciful.*1. **A. E. R.**<sup>1492</sup>

(This is) a Book,  
With verses basic or fundamental<sup>1493</sup>  
(Of established meaning),  
Further explained in detail,—  
From One Who is Wise  
And Well-Acquainted (with all things):

2. (It teacheth) that ye should  
Worship none but God.  
(Say :) "Verily I am<sup>1494</sup>  
(Sent) unto you from Him  
To warn and to bring  
Glad tidings :

3. "(And to preach thus), ' Seek ye  
The forgiveness of your Lord,  
And turn to Him in repentance ;  
That He may grant you  
Enjoyment, good (and true),  
For a term appointed,  
And bestow His abounding grace  
On all who abound in merit!<sup>1495</sup>  
But if ye turn away,  
Then I fear for you  
The Penalty of a Great Day :

4. "' To God is your return,  
And He hath power  
Over all things.' "

5. Behold! they fold up<sup>1496</sup>  
Their hearts, that they may lie  
Hid from Him! Ah! even  
When they cover themselves  
With their garments, He knoweth  
What they conceal, and what  
They reveal : for He knoweth

- 11 Well the (inmost secrets)  
30 Of the hearts<sup>1497</sup>



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

١- اَلرَّاسِ كَتَبْ اَخْكَمَتْ اِيْتُهُ  
ثُمَّ فُضِّلَتْ مِنْ لَدُنْ  
حَكِيمٍ خَبِيرٍ ۝

٢- اَلَا تَعْبُدُوْا اِلَّا اللّٰهَ  
اِنِّىْ لَكُمْ رَحْمَةٌ  
نَذِيْرٌ وَبَشِيْرٌ ۝

٣- وَاِنْ اَسْتَغْفِرُوْا رَبَّكُمْ ثُمَّ تُوبُوْا اِلَيْهِ  
يُمَتِّعْكُمْ مَتَاعًا حَسَنًا اِلَىٰ اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى  
وَيُؤْتِ كُلَّ ذِي فَضْلٍ فَضْلَهُ  
وَاِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَاِنَّ اَخَاْفَ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ  
يَوْمٍ كَبِيْرٍ ۝

٤- اِلَىٰ اللّٰهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ  
وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ۝

٥- اَلَا اِنَّهُمْ يَتَّبِعُوْنَ صُدُوْرَهُمْ لَيْسَتْ تُخْفَوْنَ  
مِنْهُ اَلرَّحِيْمُ يَسْتَعْشُوْنَ نِيَابَهُمْ  
يَعْلَمُ مَا يُسْرُوْنَ وَمَا يُعْلِنُوْنَ  
اِنَّهٗ عَلِيْمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُوْرِ ۝

1492. For the meaning of these mystic Letters, see Introduction to S. x.

1493. See n. 347 to iii. 7. Every basic principle is included in God's Revelation, and it is further illustrated and explained in detail.

1494. *Muṣṭafā's* Message—as was the Message of all apostles—was to warn against evil, and to bring the glad tidings of God's Mercy and Grace to all who would receive it in Faith and trust in God. This double Message is preached illustratively in this Sūra.

1495. The enjoyment of all good and true things in life refers, I think, to the present life with its limited term, and the abounding Grace refers to the higher spiritual reward, which begins here but is completed in the life to come.

1496. The heart (literally *breast* in Arabic) is already well guarded in the body; and secrets are supposed to be hidden in the heart or breast. Foolish persons might further cover up their hearts with cloaks, but even so, nothing can be hidden from God.

1497. Cf. iii. 119.

6. ~~There~~ Here is no moving creature  
On earth but its sustenance<sup>1498</sup>  
Dependeth on God: He knoweth  
The time and place of its  
Definite abode and its  
Temporary deposit:<sup>1499</sup>  
All is in a clear Record.<sup>1500</sup>

7. He it is Who created  
The heavens and the earth  
In six Days<sup>1501</sup>—and His Throne  
Was over the Waters—<sup>1502</sup>  
That He might try you,<sup>1503</sup>  
Which of you is best  
In conduct. But if  
Thou wert to say to them,  
"Ye shall indeed be raised up  
After death", the Unbelievers  
Would be sure to say,<sup>1504</sup>  
"This is nothing but  
Obvious sorcery!"

8. If We delay the penalty  
For them for a definite term,  
They are sure to say,  
"What keeps it back?"<sup>1505</sup>

۱- وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا  
عَلَى اللَّهِ رِزْقُهَا وَيَعْلَمُ مُسْتَقَرَّهَا وَ  
مُسْتَوْدَعَهَا

كُلٌّ فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ ○

۲- وَهُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ  
فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ وَكَانَ عَرْشُهُ عَلَى الْمَاءِ  
لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا  
وَلَكِنْ قُلْتَ إِنَّكُمْ مَبْعُوثُونَ مِنْ بَعْدِ  
الْمَوْتِ

لَيَقُولَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا

إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُبِينٌ ○

۳- وَلَكِنْ أَخَّرْنَا عَنْهُمْ الْعَذَابَ إِلَى  
أُمَّةٍ مُعْدُودَةٍ لَيَقُولُنَّ مَا يَحْبِسُهُ

1498. Cf. vi. 59. Nothing happens in Creation except by the Word of God and with the knowledge of God. Not a leaf stirs but by His Will. Its maintenance in every sense is dependent on His Will.

1499. *Mustaqarr*=definite abode; where a thing stops or stays for some time, where it is established. *Mustauda'*=where a thing is laid up or deposited for a little while. Referring to animals, the former denotes its life on this earth; the latter its temporary pre-natal existence in the egg or the womb and its after-death existence in the tomb or whatever state it is in until its resurrection.

1500. Cf. vi. 59 and n. 880, and x. 61 and n. 1450.

1501. See n. 1031 to vii. 54

1502. It is scientifically correct to say that all life was evolved out of the waters, and this statement also occurs in the Qur'ân, xxi. 30. The Throne of God's authority is metaphorically expressed as over the waters, i.e., as regulating all life. Some such mystic meaning, I think, also attaches to the Gen. i. 2. The past sense "was" refers to the time before life developed in solid forms, on land and in air.

1503. The Creation we see around us is not idle sport or play (in Hindi, *Lila*) or whim on the part of God. It is the medium through which our spiritual life is to develop, with such free-will as we have. 'This life is our testing time.'

1504. The Unbelievers, who do not believe in a Future life, think all talk of it is like a sorcerer's talk, empty of reality. But in this they show their ignorance, and they are begging the question.

1505. As much as to say: "Oh! all this talk of punishment is nonsense. There is no such thing!"

Ah ! On the day it (actually)  
Reaches them, nothing will  
Turn it away from them,  
And they will be completely  
Encircled by that which  
They used to mock at !

## SECTION 2.

9. **E**f We give man a taste  
Of Mercy from Ourselves,  
And then withdraw it from him,  
Behold ! he is in despair  
And (falls into) blasphemy.<sup>1506</sup>
10. But if We give him a taste  
Of (Our) favours after  
Adversity hath touched him,  
He is sure to say,  
"All evil has departed from  
me : "<sup>1507</sup>  
Behold ! he falls into exultation  
And pride.
11. Not so do those who show  
Patience and constancy, and  
work<sup>1508</sup>  
Righteousness ; for them  
Is forgiveness (of sins)  
And a great reward.
12. **P**erchance thou mayest (feel  
The inclination) to give up  
A part of what is revealed<sup>1509</sup>  
Unto thee, and thy heart

أَلَا يَوْمَ يَأْتِيهِمْ لَيْسَ مَصْرُوفًا عَنْهُمْ  
وَحَاقَ بِهِمْ  
مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِءُونَ ۝

۹-وَلَئِنْ أَذَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنَّا رَحْمَةً  
ثُمَّ نَرَدَّهَا مِنْهُ  
إِنَّهُ لَكُفُورٌ ۝

۱۰-وَلَئِنْ أَذَقْنَاهُ نِعْمَاءَ  
بَعْدَ ضَرَاءٍ مَشَتْهُ  
لَيَقُولَنَّ ذَهَبَ الشَّيْءُ عَنِّي  
إِنَّهُ لَفَرِحٌ فَخُورٌ ۝

۱۱-إِلَّا الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ  
أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ  
وَأَجْرٌ كَبِيرٌ ۝

۱۲-فَلَعَلَّكَ تَارِكٌ  
بَعْضُ مَا يُوْحَىٰ إِلَيْكَ

1506. He does not realise that some kinds of chastening are good for discipline and the training of our spiritual faculties.

1507. He takes it as a matter of course, or as due to his own merit or cleverness ! He does not realise that both in good and ill fortune there is a beneficent purpose in the Plan of God.

1508. Their attitude is the right one : to take ill-fortune with fortitude and good fortune with humility, and in either case go on persevering in good deeds to their fellow-creatures.

1509. Every man of God, when he not only encounters opposition, but is actually accused of falsehood and those very evils which he is protesting against, may feel inclined, in his human weakness, to ask himself the question, "Supposing I omit this little point, will God's Truth then be accepted more readily ?" Or he may think to himself, "If I had only more money to organise my campaign, or something which will draw people's attention, like the company of an angel, how much better can I push my Message ?" He is told that truth must be delivered as it is revealed, even though portions of it may be unpalatable, and that resources and other means to draw people to him are beside the point. He must use just such resources and opportunities as he has, and leave the rest to God.

Feeleth straitened lest they say,  
 "Why is not a treasure sent down  
 Unto him, or why does not  
 An angel come down with him?"  
 But thou art there only to warn!  
 It is God that arrangeth  
 All affairs!

13. Or they may say, "He forged it."  
 Say, "Bring ye then ten Sūras  
 Forged, like unto it, and call  
 (To your aid) whomsoever  
 Ye can, other than God!—  
 If ye speak the truth!"<sup>1510</sup>

14. "If then they (your false gods)  
 Answer not your (call),  
 Know ye that this Revelation  
 Is sent (replete) with the  
 knowledge  
 Of God, and that there is  
 No god but He! Will ye  
 Even then submit (to Islam)?"

15. Those who desire  
 The life of the Present  
 And its glitter, — to them  
 We shall pay (the price  
 Of) their deeds therein, —  
 Without diminution.<sup>1511</sup>

16. They are those for whom  
 There is nothing in the Hereafter  
 But the Fire: vain  
 Are the designs they frame therein,  
 And of no effect  
 Are the deeds that they do!

17. Can they be (like) those  
 Who accept a Clear (Sign)  
 From their Lord, and whom  
 A witness from Himself<sup>1512</sup>

وَضَائِقٌ بِهِ صَدْرُكَ أَنْ يَقُولُوا  
 لَوْلَا أُنْزِلَ عَلَيْهِ كُتُبٌ  
 أَوْ جَاءَ مَعَهُ مَلَكٌ إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ نَذِيرٌ  
 وَاللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَكِيلٌ ۝

۱۳- أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِعَشْرِ سُوْرٍ  
 مِثْلِهِ مُفْتَرِيْنَ وَادْعُوا مَنِ اسْتِطَعْتُمْ  
 مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِيْنَ ۝

۱۴- قَالُوا لِمَ يَسْتَجِيبُوا لَكَ  
 قَالُوا إِنَّمَا أَنْزَلَ بِعِلْمِ اللَّهِ  
 وَأَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ  
 فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ ۝

۱۵- مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدِ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا  
 وَزِينَتَهَا نُوفِ إِلَيْهِمْ أَعْمَالَهُمْ فِيهَا  
 وَهُمْ فِيهَا لَا يَبْخُسُونَ ۝

۱۶- وَلِلَّذِيْنَ الذِّمِّيْنَ لَيْسَ لَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ  
 إِلَّا النَّارُ وَحِطَّ مَا صَنَعُوا فِيهَا  
 وَبِطُلٍّ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ۝

۱۷- أَفَمَنْ كَانَ عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ  
 مِنْ رَبِّهِ وَيَتْلُوهُ شَاهِدٌ مِنْهُ

1510. Cf. ii. 23 and x. 38.

1511. If worldly men desire the glitter of this world, they shall have it in full measure, but it is false glitter, and it involves the negation of that spiritual life which comes from the guidance of the inner light and from the revelation of God, as described in verse 17 below.

1512. "A witness from Himself": i.e., the Book which was given to Muḥammad, the Holy Qur'ān, which is compared to the original Revelation given to Moses. We make no difference between one true and genuine Message and another, nor between one apostle and another,—for they all come from the One True God.

Doth teach, as did the Book  
Of Moses before it,—a guide <sup>1513</sup>  
And a mercy? They believe  
Therein; but those of the Sects  
That reject it,—the Fire  
Will be their promised  
Meeting-place. Be not then  
In doubt thereon: for it is  
Truth from thy Lord:  
Yet many among men  
Do not believe!

وَمِنْ قَبْلِهِ كَتَبَ مُوسَىٰ إِمَامًا وَرَحْمَةً  
أُولَٰئِكَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ ۚ وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِهِ مِنَ  
الْأَحْزَابِ ۖ فَالْعَارُ مُوعِدُهُ ۖ  
فَلَا تَكُ فِي مِرْيَةٍ مِنْهُ ۖ  
إِنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ  
وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ۝

18. ~~Who~~ doth more wrong  
Than those who invent a lie  
Against God? They will be  
Turned back to the presence  
Of their Lord, and the witnesses  
Will say, "These are the ones  
Who lied against their Lord!  
Behold! the Curse of God  
Is on those who do wrong!—

۱۸- وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ افْتَرَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا  
أُولَٰئِكَ يُعْرَضُونَ عَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ  
وَيَقُولُ الْأَشْهَادُ  
هَؤُلَاءِ الَّذِينَ كَذَبُوا عَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ ۖ  
أَلَا لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ ۝

19. "Those who would hinder (men)  
From the path of God  
And would seek in it  
Something crooked: these were  
They who denied the  
Hereafter!" <sup>1514</sup>

۱۹- الَّذِينَ يَصُدُّونَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ  
وَيَبْغُونَهَا عِوَجًا ۖ  
وَهُمْ بِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ كَافِرُونَ ۝

20. They will in no wise  
Frustrate (His design) on earth,  
Nor have they protectors  
Besides God! Their penalty <sup>1515</sup>  
Will be doubled! They lost  
The power to hear,  
And they did not see!

۲۰- أُولَٰئِكَ لَمْ يَكُونُوا مُعْجِزِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ  
وَمَا كَانَ لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مِنْ أَوْلِيَاءَ ۚ  
يُضَعَّفُ لَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ مَا كَانُوا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ  
السَّمْعَ وَمَا كَانُوا يُبْصِرُونَ ۝

21. They are the ones who  
Have lost their own souls:

۲۱- أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ

1513. "Guide": the Arabic word here is *Imām*, a leader, a guide, one that directs to the true Path. Such a direction is an instance of the Mercy and Goodness of God to man. The Qur-ān and the Apostle Muḥammad are also called, each, a Guide and a Mercy, and so are these epithets applicable to previous Books and Apostles.

1514. Cf. vii. 45.

1515. Cf. vii. 38. In this context, it is implied that they committed a two-fold wrong: (1) in inventing falsehoods against God, which deadened their own soul, and (2) in leading others astray or hindering them from God's path. Thus they lost the faculty of hearing, which they might have used to hear the Word of God, and they blinded the faculty of sight by shutting out God's light.

And the (fancies) they invented  
Have left them in the lurch!

وَضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ ○

22. Without a doubt, these  
Are the very ones who  
Will lose most in the Hereafter!

لَا جَرَمَ لَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ هُمْ الْخَسِرُونَ ○

23. But those who believe  
And work righteousness,  
And humble themselves  
Before their Lord,—<sup>1516</sup>  
They will be Companions  
Of the Garden, to dwell  
Therein for aye!

۲۳- إِنْ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ  
وَاحْبَتُوا إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ  
أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ  
هُم فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ○

24. These two kinds (of men)  
May be compared to  
The blind and deaf,  
And those who can see  
And hear well. Are they  
Equal when compared?  
Will ye not then take heed?

۲۴- مَثَلُ الْفَرِيقَيْنِ كَالْأَعْمَىٰ وَالْأَصْمَىٰ  
وَالْبَصِيرِ وَالسَّمِيعِ  
هَلْ يَسْتَوِينَ مَثَلًا أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ ○

C. 105.—Noah walked righteously and humbly  
(xi. 25-49.) As in the sight of God. With unselfish  
Love for his people he warned them  
And taught them. But they did flout  
And reject his Message with scorn  
And insults. God gave him directions  
To build an Ark against the impending  
Flood which was to purify the world  
From Sin and Unrighteousness. In it  
Were saved Noah and those who believed.  
So were promised salvation and God's Peace  
And Blessings to the Righteous evermore!

### SECTION 3.

25. **W**e sent Noah to his People  
(With a mission): "I have come  
To you with a Clear Warning:

۲۵- وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ  
إِنِّي لَكُمْ نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ ○

26. "That ye serve none but God:  
Verily I do fear for you

۲۶- أَنْ لَا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا اللَّهَ إِنِّي أَخَافُ

1516. Note that the humility is to be "before their Lord," i.e., in God's sight. There is no virtue, quite the contrary, in rubbing our noses to the ground before men. We are not to be arrogant even before men because we are humble as in God's sight. Nor does true humility lose self-confidence: for that self-confidence arises from confidence in the support and help of God.



## The Penalty of a Grievous

Day.<sup>1517</sup>

عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابٌ يَوْمَ الْيَوْمِ ○

27. But the Chiefs of the  
Unbelievers

Among his People said :  
" We see (in) thee nothing  
But a man like ourselves :  
Nor do we see that any  
Follow thee but the meanest  
Among us, in judgment immature :  
Nor do we see in you (all)  
Any merit above us :  
In fact we think ye are liars ! " <sup>1518</sup>

٢٧- فَقَالَ الْمَلَأُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ قَوْمِهِ  
مَا نُرِيدُكَ إِلَّا بُشْرًا وَمَثَلًا  
وَمَا نُرِيدُكَ اتِّبَاعَكَ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ  
هُمْ أَرَادُوا لَنَا بِأَدْيِ الْزَّأْيِ  
وَمَا نُرِيدُ لَكُمْ عَلَيْنَا مِنْ فَضْلٍ  
بَلْ نُنَظُنُّكُمْ كَذَّابِينَ ○

28. He said: " Oh my People !  
See ye if (it be that)  
I have a Clear Sign  
From my Lord, and that He  
Hath sent Mercy unto me  
From His own Presence, but  
That the Mercy hath been  
Obscured from your sight ? <sup>1519</sup>  
Shall we compel you  
To accept it when ye  
Are averse to it ?

٢٨- قَالَ يَقَوْمِ أَرَأَيْتُمْ  
إِنْ كُنْتُ عَلَى بَيِّنَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّي  
وَأَتَدْبِرُ رَحْمَةً مِنْ عِنْدِهِ  
فَعَتَيْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ  
أَنْ تُلْزِمُونَهَا وَأَنْتُمْ لَهَا كَارِهُونَ ○

29. " And oh my People !  
I ask you for no wealth

٢٩- وَيَقَوْمِ لَا تَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مَا لَآ

1517. Noah's mission was to a wicked world, plunged in sin. The mission had a double character, as in the mission of all men of God: it had to warn men against evil and call them to repentance, and it had to give them the glad tidings of God's Grace in case they turned back to God: it was a Guidance and a Mercy.

1518. The Unbelievers were impelled by three powerful human motives of evil to resist Grace: (1) *jealousy of other men*; they said, "Why, you are no better than ourselves," half perceiving the Prophet's superiority, and half ignoring it; (2) *contempt of the weak and lowly*, who are often better intellectually, morally, and spiritually; they said, "We cannot believe or do what these fellows, our inferiors in social rank, believe or do!"; (3) *arrogance and self-sufficiency*, which is a vice cognate to (2), looked at from a different angle; they said, "We are really better than the lot of you!" Now the claim made on behalf of God's Message attacked all these three attitudes. And all they could say against it was to abuse it impatiently, and call it a lie.

1519. Noah's answer (like that of the Man of God who spoke in later ages in Mecca and Medina) is a pattern of humility, gentleness, firmness, persuasiveness, truth, and love for his own people. First, he meekly (not exultingly) informs them that he has got a Message from God. Secondly, he tells them that it is a Message of Mercy even in its warning, though in their arrogance the Mercy may be hidden from them. Thirdly, he tells them plainly that there can be no compulsion in Religion: but will they not accept with goodwill what is for their own benefit? He pleads with them as one of their own.

In return : my reward  
Is from none but God : <sup>1520</sup>  
But I will not drive away  
(In contempt) those who believe :  
For they are the ones that desire  
To meet their Lord, and ye  
I see are the ignorant ones !

إِنْ أَجْرِي إِلَّا عَلَى اللَّهِ  
وَمَا أَنَا بِطَارِدِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا  
إِنَّهُمْ مُلْقَاو رَبِّهِمْ  
وَلَكِنِّي أَرَكُمْ قَوْمًا تَبْهَلُونَ ○

30. " And oh my People !  
Who would help me against God  
If I drove them away ?  
Will ye not then take heed ? <sup>1521</sup>

٣٠- وَيَقُولُ مَنْ يَنْصُرُنِي مِنَ اللَّهِ  
إِنْ طَرَدْتُهُمْ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ ○

31. " I tell you not that <sup>1522</sup>  
With me are the Treasures <sup>1523</sup>  
Of God, nor do I know  
What is hidden,  
Nor claim I to be  
An angel. Nor yet  
Do I say, of those whom  
Your eyes do despise <sup>1524</sup>  
That God will not grant them  
(All) that is good :  
God knoweth best  
What is in their souls :  
I should, if I did,  
Indeed be a wrong-doer."

٣١- وَلَا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ عِنْدِي خَزَائِنُ اللَّهِ  
وَلَا أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبِ  
وَلَا أَقُولُ إِنِّي مَلَكٌ  
وَلَا أَقُولُ لِلَّذِينَ تَزْدَرِي أَعْيُنُكُمْ  
لَنْ يُؤْتِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ خَيْرًا  
اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ  
إِنِّي إِذَا أَلَمْتُ الظَّالِمِينَ ○

32. They said : " Oh Noah !  
Thou hast disputed with us,

٣٢- قَالُوا يَتَّبِعُكَ قَدْ جَدَلْتَنَا

1520. The fourth point in Noah's address meets then accusation that he was a liar, implying that he was serving some selfish end of his own : on the contrary, he says, he seeks no reward from them but will bear any insults they heap on him, for he looks to God rather than men. But, fifthly, if they insult the poor and needy who come to him in Faith, and think that he would send them away in order to attract the great ones of the land, he tells them plainly that they are mistaken. In fact, (sixthly), he has no hesitation in telling the blunt truth that they are the ignorant ones, and not the poor who came to seek God's Truth !

1521 But (seventhly) again he pleads, with as much earnestness as ever, that he is one of themselves, and just doing his truest duty. Would they have him do less ? Indeed, would they not themselves see the Truth and come into the goodly company of Believers ?

1522. The eighth point that Noah urges is that he is not a mere vulgar soothsayer pretending to reveal secrets not worth knowing, nor an angel living in another world, with no ties to them. He is their real well-wisher, delivering a true Message from God.

1523. Cf. vi. 50 and n. 867.

1524. But Noah will not close his argument without defending the men of Faith whom the Chiefs despise because they are lacking in worldly goods. He tells them plainly that God perhaps sees in them something in which they, the arrogant Chiefs, are lacking. Their spiritual faculties can only be appreciated truly by Him to Whom all the secrets of the spirit are open. But he, Noah, must declare boldly his own Faith, and this is the ninth point in his argument.

And (much) hast thou prolonged  
The dispute with us : now  
Bring upon us what thou  
Threatenest us with, if thou  
Speakest the truth ! " 1525

فَاثْبَرْتِ بِحَدِّ النَّاسِ  
فَاثْبَارِيَا تَعْدُنَا  
إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ ○

33. He said : " Truly, God  
Will bring it on you  
If He wills,—and then,  
Ye will not be able  
To frustrate it ! " 1526

٣٣- قَالَ إِنَّمَا يَأْتِيكُمْ بِهِ اللَّهُ  
إِنْ شَاءَ  
وَمَا أَنْتُمْ بِمُعْجِزِينَ ○

34. " Of no profit will be  
My counsel to you,  
Much as I desire  
To give you (good) counsel,  
If it be that God  
Willeth to leave you astray : 1527  
He is your Lord !  
And to Him will ye return ! " "

٣٤- وَلَا يَنْفَعُكُمْ نُصْحِي  
إِنْ أَرَدْتُ أَنْ أَنْصَحَ لَكُمْ  
إِنْ كَانَ اللَّهُ يُرِيدُ أَنْ يُغْوِيَكُمْ  
هُوَ رَبُّكُمْ وَالْإِلَهُ تَرْجَعُونَ ○

35. Or do they say,  
" He has forged it " ? Say :  
" If I had forged it,  
On me were my sin !  
And I am free  
Of the sins of which  
Ye are guilty ! " 1528

٣٥- أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ  
قُلْ إِنْ افْتَرَيْتُهُ لَعَلَّيْ أَجْرًا بِي  
وَأَنَا بَرِيءٌ مِمَّا تُخْبِرُونَ ○

1525. To Noah's address the worldly Chiefs give a characteristic reply. In its aggressive spirit it is the very antithesis of the gentle remonstrances of Noah. Because he had gently and patiently argued with them, they impatiently accuse him of "disputing with them" and "prolonging the dispute". They are unable to deal with his points. So they arrogantly throw out their challenge, which is a compound of hectoring insolence, unreasoning scepticism, and biting irony. "You foretell disaster to us if we don't mend our ways! Let us see you bring it on! Now, if you please! Or shall we have to call you a liar?"

1526. To the blasphemous challenge addressed to Noah his only answer could be: "I never claimed that I could punish you. All punishment is in the hands of God, and He knows best when His punishment will descend. But this I can tell you! His punishment is sure if you do not repent, and when it comes, you will not be able to ward it off!"

1527. But Noah's heart bleeds for his people. They are preparing their own undoing! All his efforts are to be vain! Obstinate as they are, God's grace must be withdrawn, and then who can help them, and what use is any counsel? But again he will try to remind them of their Lord, and turn their face to Him. For their ultimate return to His judgment-seat is certain, to answer for their conduct.

1528. The fine narrative of dramatic power is here interrupted by a verse which shows that the story of Noah is also a Parable for the time and the ministry of Muḥammad the Apostle. The wonderful force and aptness of the story cannot be denied. The enemy therefore turns and says, "Oh! but you invented it!" The answer is, "No! but it is God's own truth! You may be accustomed to dealing in falsehoods, but I protest that I am free from such sins." The place of this verse here corresponds to the place of verse 49 at the end of the next Section.

While understanding this verse to refer to Muḥammad, as most of the accepted Commentators understand it, it is possible also, I think, to read it into the story of Noah, for all Prophets have similar spiritual experiences.

## SECTION 4.

36. It was revealed to Noah:  
 "None of thy People will  
 believe<sup>1529</sup>  
 Except those who have believed  
 Already! So grieve no longer  
 Over their (evil) deeds.

٣٦- وَأَوْحَىٰ إِلَىٰ نُوحٍ أَنَّهُ لَنْ يُؤْمِنَ مِنْ  
 قَوْمِكَ إِلَّا مَنْ قَدْ آمَنَ  
 فَلَا تَبْتَئِسْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْعَلُونَ ۝

37. "But construct an Ark  
 Under Our eyes and Our<sup>1530</sup>  
 Inspiration, and address Me  
 No (further) on behalf  
 Of those who are in sin:  
 For they are about to be  
 Overwhelmed (in the Flood)."

٣٧- وَأَصْنَعِ الْفُلَ  
 بِأَعْيُنِنَا وَوَحِّينَا  
 وَلَا تَحْطِئْ لِنَا فِي الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا  
 إِنَّهُمْ مُّغْرَقُونَ ۝

38. Forthwith he starts  
 Constructing the Ark:  
 Every time that the Chiefs  
 Of his People passed by him,  
 They threw ridicule on him.<sup>1531</sup>  
 He said: "If ye ridicule  
 Us now, we (in our turn)  
 Can look down on you  
 With ridicule likewise!"<sup>1532</sup>

٣٨- وَيَصْنَعِ الْفُلَ  
 وَكُلَّمَا مَرَّ عَلَيْهِمْ مَلَأَ مِنْ قُوَّةٍ يَسْتَرْفِئُونَ  
 مِنْهُ  
 قَالَ إِنْ تَسْخَرُوا مِنِّي  
 فَأَنَا تَسْخَرُ مِنْكُمْ كَمَا تَسْخَرُونَ ۝

39. "But soon will ye know  
 Who it is on whom  
 Will descend a Penalty  
 That will cover them

٣٩- فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ  
 مَنْ يَأْتِيهِ عَذَابٌ

1529. The story of Noah is resumed. A point was reached, when it was clear that there was no hope of saving the sinners, who were courting their own destruction. It was to be a great Flood. So Noah was ordered to construct a great Ark or Ship, not a sailing ship, but a heavy vessel to remain afloat in the Flood, so that the righteous could be saved in it.

1530. It was to be built under the special instructions of God, to serve the special purpose it was intended to serve.

1531. The ridicule of the sinners, from their own point of view, was natural. Here was a preacher-turned carpenter! Here was a plan in the higher reaches of the Mesopotamian basin, drained by the majestic Tigris, over 800 to 900 miles from the sea (the Persian Gulf) in a straight line! Yet he talks of a flood like the Sea! All material civilisations pride themselves on their Public Works and their drainage schemes. And here was a fellow relying on God! But did not their narrow pride seem ridiculous also to the man of God? Here were men steeped in sin and insolence! And they pit themselves against the power and the promise of God! Truly a contemptible race is man!

1532. The Arabic Aorist may be construed either by the present tense or the future tense, and both make good sense here. Following Zamakhshari, I construe in the present tense, because the future is so tragic for the sinners. For the time being the worldly ones looked down on the Believers as they always do; but the Believers relied on God, and pitied their critics for knowing no better! — for their arrogance was really ridiculous.

With shame,—will be unloosed  
A Penalty lasting:”

40. At length, behold !  
There came Our Command,  
And the fountains of the earth <sup>1533</sup>  
Gushed forth! We said:  
“Embark therein, of each kind  
Two, male and female, <sup>1534</sup>  
And your family—except  
Those against whom the Word  
Has already gone forth,—<sup>1535</sup>  
And the Believers.”  
But only a few  
Believed with him.

41. So he said: “Embark ye  
On the Ark,  
In the name of God,  
Whether it move  
Or be at rest!  
For my Lord is, be sure,  
Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful!”

42. So the Ark floated  
With them on the waves  
(Towering) like mountains, <sup>1536</sup>  
And Noah called out  
To his son, who had  
Separated himself (from the rest):  
“Oh my son! embark  
With us, and be not  
With the Unbelievers!”

يُنْزِلُهُ وَيَجْعَلُ عَلَيْهِ عَذَابٌ مُّقِيمٌ ٥

٣٠- حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا  
وَقَارَ الْعَنْتُورُ  
ثَلَاثًا أَحْمِلْ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجَيْنِ  
اِثْنَيْنِ وَأَهْلَكَ إِلَّا مَنْ سَبَقَ عَلَيْهِ  
الْقَوْلُ وَمَنْ آمَنَ  
وَمَا آمَنَ مَعَهُ إِلَّا قَلِيلٌ ٥

٣١- وَقَالَ ازْكُبُوا فِيهَا  
بِسْمِ اللَّهِ فَجَرِدْهَا وَمُرْسَاهَا  
إِن رَّبِّي لَغَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ٥

٣٢- وَهِيَ تَجْرِي بِهِمْ فِي مَوْجٍ كَالْجِبَالِ  
وَنَادَىٰ نُوحٌ ابْنَهُ  
وَكَانَ فِي مَعْزِلٍ  
يُبَيِّنُ اِزْكُبْ مَعَنَا  
وَلَا تَكُن مَعَ الْكَافِرِينَ ٥

1533. *Fār-at-lannīru*. Two interpretations have been given: (1) the fountains or the springs on the surface of the earth bubbled over or gushed forth; or (2) the oven (of God's Wrath) boiled over. The former has the weight of the best authority behind it and I prefer it. Moreover, the same phrase occurs in xxiii. 27, where it is a clause coordinated (as here) with the coming of God's Command. These two passages may be compared with liv. 11-12, where it is said that water poured forth from the skies and gushed forth from the springs. This double action is familiar to any one who has seen floods on a large scale. The rain from above would saturate the great Ararat Plateau, and give great force to the springs and fountains in the valley of the Tigris below.

1534. *Zaujaini*: the dual number refers to the two individuals in each pair of opposite sexes. Some of the most authoritative Commentators (*e.g.*, *Imām Rāzī*) construe in this sense, though others construe it to mean two pairs of each species.

1535. A disobedient and recalcitrant son (or step-son or grandson) of Noah is mentioned below (xi. 42-43, 45-46). A member of the family, who breaks away from the traditions of the family in things that matter, ceases to share in the privileges of the family.

1536. The simile of mountains applies to the waves, which were mountain high,—literally, for the peaks were being submerged.

43. The son replied : " I will  
Betake myself to some mountain ;<sup>1537</sup>  
It will save me from  
The water." Noah said :  
" This day nothing can save,  
From the Command of God,  
Any but those on whom  
He hath mercy ! "—  
And the waves came  
Between them, and the son  
Was among those  
Overwhelmed in the Flood.

٢٣- قَالَ سَاوِي إِلَى جَبَلٍ  
يَعِصِمُنِي مِنَ الْمَاءِ  
قَالَ لَا عَاصِمَ الْيَوْمَ  
مِنْ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ إِلَّا مَنْ رَحِمَهُ  
وَكَانَ بَيْنَهُمَا الْوُجُوهُ  
فَكَانَ مِنَ الْمَغْرُقِينَ ○

44. ~~When~~ When the word went forth :<sup>1538</sup>  
" Oh earth ! swallow up  
Thy water, and oh sky !  
Withhold (thy rain) !  
And the water abated,  
And the matter was ended.  
The Ark rested on Mount<sup>1539</sup>  
Jūdi, and the word  
Went forth : " Away  
With those who do wrong ! "

٢٣- وَقِيلَ يَا أَرْضُ ابْلَعِي  
مَاءَكِ وَيَسْأَأِ  
أَقْلَعِي وَغَبَضَ الْمَاءَ وَقَضَى الْأَمْرُ  
وَأَسْتَوَتْ عَلَى الْجُودِيِّ  
وَقِيلَ بَعْدَ الْقُورِ الظَّالِمِينَ ○

1537. The Unbelievers refuse to believe in God, but have great faith in material things! This young man was going to save himself on mountain peaks, not knowing that the peaks were themselves being submerged.

1538. A wonderful passage. The whole picture is painted in just a few words. The chain of material facts are linked together, not only in their relations to each other, but also in their relation to the spiritual forces that control them, and the spiritual consequences of Sin and wrong-doing. The drowning in the material sense was the least part of the Penalty. A whole new world came into existence after the Deluge—as always happens after any great catastrophe, like the World War of 1914-18.

1539. Let us get a little idea of the geography of the place. The letters J, B, and K are philologically interchangeable, and Jūdi, Gūdi, Kūdi are sounds that can pass into each other. There is no doubt that the name is connected with the name "Kurd", in which the letter *r* is a later interpolation, for the oldest Sumerian records name a people called Kūtū or Gūtū as holding the middle Tigris region not later than 2000 B.C. (see E. B., Kurdistan). That region comprises the modern Turkish district of Bohtan, in which Jabal Jūdi is situated (near the frontiers of modern Turkey, modern Iraq, and modern Syria), and the town of Jazrat ibn 'Umar, (on the present Turco-Syrian frontier), and it extends into Iraq and Persia. The great mountain mass of the Ararat plateau dominates this district. This mountain system "is unique in the Old World in containing great sheets of water that are bitter lakes without outlets, Lake Van and Lake Urumiya being the chief" (E. B., Asia). Such would be the very region for a stupendous Deluge if the usual scanty rainfall were to be changed into a very heavy downpour. A glacier damming of Lake Van in the Ice Age would have produced the same result. The region has many local traditions connected with Noah and the Flood. The Biblical legend of Mount Ararat being the resting place of Noah's Ark is hardly plausible, seeing that the highest peak of Ararat is over 16,000 feet high. If it means one of the lower peaks of the Ararat system, it agrees with the Muslim tradition about Mount Jūdi (or Gūdi), and this is in accordance with the oldest and best local traditions. These traditions are accepted by Josephus, by the Nestorian Christians, and indeed by all the Eastern Christians and Jews, and they are the best in touch with local traditions. See (Viscount) J. Bryce, "Transcaucasia and Ararat," 4th ed., 1896, p. 216.

45. And Noah called upon His Lord, and said :  
" Oh my Lord ! surely  
My son is of my family !  
And Thy promise is true,  
And Thou art  
The Justest of Judges ! "
46. He said : " Oh Noah !  
He is not of thy family : <sup>1540</sup>  
For his conduct is unrighteous.  
So ask not of Me  
That of which thou  
Hast no knowledge !  
I give thee counsel, lest  
Thou act like the ignorant ! "
47. Noah said : " Oh my Lord !  
I do seek refuge with Thee,  
Lest I ask Thee for that  
Of which I have no knowledge.  
And unless Thou forgive me  
And have Mercy on me,  
I should indeed be lost ! " <sup>1541</sup>
48. The word came : " Oh Noah !  
Come down (from the Ark)  
With Peace from Us,  
And Blessings on thee  
And on some of the Peoples  
(Who will spring) from those  
With thee : but (there will be  
Other) Peoples to whom We  
Shall grant their pleasures <sup>1542</sup>  
(For a time), but in the end  
Will a grievous Penalty  
Reach them from Us. " <sup>1543</sup>

٢٥- وَتَأَذَىٰ نُّوحٌ رَبَّهُ فَقَالَ  
رَبِّ اِنَّ اِبْنِي مِنْ اَهْلِي  
وَاِنَّ وَعْدَكَ الْحَقُّ  
وَانتَ اَحْكَمُ الْحَاكِمِيْنَ ۝

٢٦- قَالَ يٰنُوحُ اِنَّكَ لَيْسَ مِنْ اَهْلِكَ  
اِنَّكَ عَمَلٌ عَتِيْدٌ صٰلِحٌ  
فَلَا تَسْئَلْنِ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ  
اِنِّىْ اَعْطٰكَ اَنْ تَكُوْنَ مِنَ الْخٰلِدِيْنَ ۝

٢٧- قَالَ رَبِّ اِنِّىْ اَعُوْذُ بِكَ  
اَنْ اَسْئَلَكَ مَا لَيْسَ لِيْ بِهِ عِلْمٌ  
وَالاَتَقُوْنِيْ وَتَرْحَمُنِيْ  
اَكُنْ مِنَ الْخٰصِيْنَ ۝

٢٨- قِيْلَ يٰنُوحُ اهْبِطْ  
بِسٰلَمٍ مِّنَّا وَبَرَكَاتٍ عَلَيْنَا  
وَ عَلٰى اَمَمٍ مِّنْ قَعَكَ  
وَ اَمَمٌ سَنُتَعَلِمُهُمْ  
ثُمَّ يَنْصَرِفُ عَنْهُمْ مِّنَّا  
عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ۝

1540. See n. 1535 above. Like all men of God, Noah was kind-hearted, but he is told that there can be no compromise with evil. And Noah acknowledges the reproof. There was a wife of Noah, who was also an unbelieving woman (lxvi. 10), and she suffered the fate of Unbelievers.

1541. Noah, in his natural affection and respect for ties of relationship, was overcome with human weakness in wishing to reverse the law of spiritual justice. It was not sin but ignorance. His ignorance was corrected by divine inspiration, and he immediately saw the full Truth, acknowledged his error, and asked for God's forgiveness and mercy. This is the standard set for us all.

1542. Cf. ii. 126.

1543. Those who truly seek God's light and guidance and sincerely bend their will to His Will are freely admitted to God's grace. Notwithstanding any human weaknesses in them, they are advanced higher in the spiritual stage on account of their Faith, Trust, and Striving after Right. They are given God's Peace, which gives the soul true calmness and strength, and all the blessings that flow from spiritual life. This was given not only to Noah and his family but to all the righteous people who were saved with him. And their descendants were also promised those blessings on condition of righteousness. But some of them fell from grace, as we know in history. God's grace is not a social or family privilege. Each people and each individual must earnestly strive for it and earn it.

49. Such are some of the stories  
Of the Unseen, which We  
Have revealed unto thee :  
Before this, neither thou  
Nor thy People knew them.  
So persevere patiently :  
For the End is for those  
Who are righteous.<sup>1544</sup>

٢٩- تِلْكَ مِنْ أَثْمَارِ الْغَيْبِ  
تُؤْتِيهَا إِلَيْكَ مَا كُنْتَ تَعْلَمُهَا أَنْتَ  
وَلَا قَوْمُكَ مِنْ قَبْلِ هَذَا فَاصْبِرْ  
إِنَّ الْعَاقِبَةَ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ○

- C. 106.—Awful were the fates of the 'Ād  
(xi. 50-48.) And the Thamūd, two mighty peoples  
Of ancient Arabia. They rejected  
God and His Message and went on  
In their evil ways,—the 'Ād  
In their superstitions and arrogance,  
And the Thamūd in their entrenched  
Selfishness, denying to others the gifts  
Of God's spacious earth! How swiftly  
Were they wiped out, as if they  
Had never been? But wrong can never stand!

#### SECTION 5.

50. To the 'Ād People  
(We sent) Hūd, one  
Of their own brethren.  
He said : " Oh my people !  
Worship God ! ye have  
No other god but Him.<sup>1545</sup>  
(Your other gods) ye do nothing  
But invent!

٥٠- وَإِلَى عَادٍ أَخَاهُمْ هُودًا  
قَالَ يَقُومُوا عِبَادُوا اللَّهَ  
مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ  
إِنْ أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا مُفْتَرُونَ ○

51. " Oh my people ! I ask of you  
No reward for this (Message).  
My reward is from none  
But Him who created me:  
Will ye not then understand ?

٥١- يَقُومُوا لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا  
إِنْ أَجْرِي إِلَّا عَلَى الَّذِي فَطَرَنِي  
أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ○

52. " And oh my people ! Ask  
Forgiveness of your Lord,

٥٢- وَيَقُومُوا اسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّكُمْ

1544. Cf. n. 1528 to xi. 35. The sum of the whole matter is that the righteous, who work for God and their fellow-men, may be traduced, insulted, and persecuted. But they will be sustained by God's Mercy. They must go on working patiently, for the End will all be for them and their Cause.

1545. Cf. the story of Hūd the Apostle of the 'Ād People, in vii. 65-72. There the argument was how other Peoples treated their Apostles as the Meccans were treating Muḥammad. Here we see another point emphasized: the insolence of the 'Ād in obstinately adhering to false gods after the true God had been preached to them, God's long-suffering grace to them, and finally God's justice in bringing them to book while the righteous were saved.

The locality in which the 'Ād flourished is indicated in n. 1040 to vii. 65.



And turn to Him (in repentance) :  
He will send you the skies <sup>1546</sup>  
Pouring abundant rain,  
And add strength  
To your strength ! <sup>1547</sup>  
So turn ye not back  
In sin ! "

53. They said : " Oh Hūd !  
No Clear (Sign) hast thou  
Brought us, and we are not  
The ones to desert our gods  
On thy word ! Nor do we  
Believe in thee ! <sup>1548</sup>

54. " We say nothing but that  
(Perhaps) some of our gods  
May have seized thee <sup>1549</sup>  
With imbecility." He said :  
" I call God to witness,  
And do ye bear witness,  
That I am free from the sin  
Of ascribing, to Him,

ثُمَّ تَوْبُوا إِلَيْهِ يُرْسِلِ السَّمَاءَ عَلَيْكُمْ  
مِدْرَارًا  
وَيَزِدْكُمْ قُوَّةً إِلَى قُوَّتِكُمْ  
وَلَا تَتَوَكَّلُوا بِغَيْرِهِ ۝

٥٣- قَالُوا يَهُودُ مَا جِئْتَنَا بِبَيِّنَةٍ  
وَمَا نَحْنُ بِتَارِكِي آلِهَتِنَا عَنْ قَوْلِكَ  
وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ ۝

٥٤- إِنْ تَقُولُ إِلَّا  
اعْتَدَلَكَ بَعْضُ آلِهَتِنَا بِسُوْرَةٍ  
قَالَ إِنِّي أَشْهَدُ اللَّهَ وَآلِهَهُمْ  
أَنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِمَّا تُشْرِكُونَ ۝

1546. The beautiful metaphor about the skies coming down with rain has been obscured unnecessarily in most translations. The country of the 'Ad was an arid country, and rain was the greatest blessing they could receive. We can imagine this being said in a time of famine, when the people performed all sorts of superstitious rites and invocations instead of turning to the true God in faith and repentance. Further, when we remember that there were, in this tract in ancient times, dams like that at Ma'arib, for the storage of rain water, the effect is still further heightened in pointing to God's care and mercy in His dealings with men.

1547. Adding strength to strength may refer to increase of population, as some Commentators think. While other parts of Arabia were sparsely populated, the irrigated lands of the 'Ad supported a comparatively dense population and added to their natural strength in the arts of peace and war. But the term used is perfectly general. They were a powerful people in their time. If they obeyed God and followed the law of righteousness, they would be still more powerful, for "righteousness exalteth a nation.

1548. The argument of the Unbelievers is practically this : " We are not convinced by you ; we don't want to be convinced ; we think you are a liar, — or perhaps a fool ! " (See next verse).

1549. See n. 1548 above. Continuing their argument, the Unbelievers make a show of making all charitable allowances for Hūd, but in reality cut him to the quick by bringing in their false gods. " To be quite polite," said they, " we will not say that you are exactly a liar ! Perhaps you have been touched with imbecility ! Ah yes ! You rail against what you call our false gods ! Some of them have paid you out, and made you a fool ! Ha ! ha ! " This mockery is even worse than their other false accusations. For it sets up false gods against the One True God, even in dealing with Hūd. So Hūd replies, with spirit and indignation : " At least keep God's name out of your futile talk ! You know as well as I do, that I worship the One True God ! You pretend that your false gods can smite a true man of God ! I accept the challenge. Scheme and plot against me as you may, all of you — you and your gods ! See if you have any power ! I ask for no quarter from you ! My trust is in God ! "

55. "Other gods as partners!  
So scheme (your worst) against me,  
All of you, and give me  
No respite.<sup>1550</sup>

٥٥- مِنْ دُونِهِ فَكَيْدُ فِي  
جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ لَا تُنْظَرُونَ ○

56. "I put my trust in God,  
My Lord and your Lord!  
There is not a moving  
Creature, but He hath  
Grasp of its fore-lock.<sup>1551</sup>  
Verily, it is my Lord  
That is on a straight Path.<sup>1552</sup>

٥٦- إِنِّي تَوَكَّلْتُ عَلَى اللَّهِ رَبِّي وَرَبِّكُمْ  
مَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ آخِذٌ بِأَصْبِعِنَا  
إِنَّ رَبِّي عَلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ○

57. "If ye turn away,—  
I (at least) have conveyed  
The Message with which I  
Was sent to you. My Lord  
Will make another People  
To succeed you, and you  
Will not harm Him<sup>1553</sup>  
In the least. For my Lord  
Hath care and watch  
Over all things."

٥٧- فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقَدْ أَبْلَغْتُكُمْ  
مَا أُرْسِلْتُ بِهِ إِلَيْكُمْ  
وَيَسْتَخْلِفُ رَبِّي قَوْمًا غَيْرَكُمْ  
وَلَا تَضُرُّونَهُ شَيْئًا  
إِنَّ رَبِّي عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَفِيفٌ ○

58. So when Our decree  
Issued, We saved Hūd  
And those who believed  
With him, by (special) Grace<sup>1554</sup>  
From Ourselves: We saved them  
From a severe Penalty.

٥٨- وَلَمَّا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا لَنَجِيَّنَا هُودًا  
وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِنَّا  
وَنَجَّيْنَاهُمْ مِنْ عَذَابٍ غَلِيظٍ ○

59. Such were the 'Ad People:  
They rejected the Signs

٥٩- وَتِلْكَ عَادٌ جَحَدُوا بِآيَاتِ

1550. Cf. vii. 195 and n 1168.

1551. *Grasp of the fore-lock*: An Arabic idiom, referring to a horse's fore-lock. The man who grasps it has complete power over the horse, and for the horse the fore-lock is as it were the crown of his beauty, the sum of his power of self-assertion. So God's power over all creatures is unlimited and no one can withstand His decree. Cf. xcvi. 15-16.

1552. That is, the standard of all virtue and righteousness is in the Will of God, the Universal Will that controls all things in goodness and justice. You are on a crooked Path. God's Path is a straight Path.

1553. Hūd was dealing with a people of pride and obstinate rebellion. He tells them that their conduct will only recoil on themselves. It can do no harm to God or in any way frustrate the beneficent Plan of God. He will only put some other people in their place to carry out His Plan. That Plan is referred to in the next sentence as "care and watch" over all his Creation.

1554. A few just men might suffer for the iniquities of the many. But God's Plan is perfect and saves His own by special Grace, if they have Faith and Trust in Him.

Of their Lord and Cherisher;  
Disobeyed His Apostles;  
And followed the command  
Of every powerful, obstinate  
Transgressor.<sup>1555</sup>

60. And they were pursued  
By a Curse in this Life,—  
And on the Day of Judgment.  
Ah! Behold! For the 'Ad  
Rejected their Lord and Cherisher!  
Ah! Behold! Removed (from sight)  
Were 'Ad the People of Hūd!

## SECTION 6.

61. ~~Al~~o the Thamūd People  
(We sent) Ṣāliḥ, one  
Of their own brethren.<sup>1556</sup>  
He said: "Oh my People!  
Worship God: ye have  
No other God but Him.  
It is He Who hath produced you<sup>1557</sup>  
From the earth and settled you  
Therein: then ask forgiveness  
Of Him, and turn to Him  
(In repentance): for my Lord  
Is (always) near, ready  
To answer."

62. They said: "Oh Ṣāliḥ!  
Thou hast been of us!—

رَبِّهِمْ وَعَصَوْا رُسُلَهُ  
وَاتَّبَعُوا أَمْرَ كُلِّ جَبَّارٍ عَنِيدٍ ٥

٦٠- وَأَتَّبَعُوا فِي هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا لَعْنَةً  
وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ  
أَلَا إِنَّكَ عَادًا لِّكُفْرًا رَبَّهُمْ  
أَلَا بَعْدَ الْعَادِ قَوْمٌ هُمُودٌ ٥

٦١- وَإِلَى ثَمُودَ أَخَاهُمْ صَالِحًا  
قَالَ يَتْلُوا آيَاتِ اللَّهِ  
مَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ إِلَهِ غَيْرِهِ  
هُوَ أَنشَأَكُمْ مِّنَ الْأَرْضِ  
وَأَسْتَعِزُّكُمْ فِيهَا  
فَاسْتَغْفِرُوا لَهُ ثُمَّ تَوَلَّوْا إِلَيْهِ  
إِنَّ رَبِّي قَرِيبٌ مُّجِيبٌ ٥

٦٢- قَالُوا يَصْلِحُ قَدْ كُنْتَ فِينَا

1555. Instead of following the beneficent Lord who cherished them, they followed every rebel against God's Law, if he only obtained a little power to dazzle them.

1556. The story of Ṣāliḥ and the Thamūd people has been told from another point of view in vii. 73-79. The difference in the point of view there and here is the same as in the story of Hūd: see n. 1545 to xi. 50. Note how the story now is the same, and yet new points and details are brought out to illustrate each new argument. Note, also, how the besetting sin of the 'Ad—pride and obstinacy—is distinguished from the besetting sin of the Thamūd—the oppression of the poor, as illustrated by the test case and symbol of the She-camel: see n. 1044 to vii. 73. All sin is in a sense pride and rebellion; yet sins take particular hues in different circumstances, and these colours are brought out as in a most artistically painted picture—with the greatest economy of words and the most piercing analysis of motives. For the locality and history of the Thamūd see n. 1043 to vii. 73.

1557. For *Anshaa* as a process of creation see n. 923 to vi. 98 and the further references given there. As to his body, man has been produced from earth or clay, and his settlement on earth is a fact of his material existence. Therefore we must conform to all the laws of our physical being, in order that through our life on this earth we may develop that higher Life which belongs to the other part of our being, our spiritual heritage. Through the use we make of our health, of our tilth, of our pastures, of material facts of all kinds, will develop our moral and spiritual nature.

A centre of our hopes <sup>1558</sup>  
 Hitherto! Dost thou (now)  
 Forbid us the worship  
 Of what our fathers worshipped?  
 But we are really  
 In suspicious (disquieting)  
 Doubt as to that to which  
 Thou invitest us."

63. He said: "Oh my people!  
 Do ye see?—If I have  
 A Clear (Sign) from my Lord  
 And He hath sent Mercy  
 Unto me from Himself,—who <sup>1559</sup>  
 Then can help me  
 Against God if I were  
 To disobey Him? What  
 Then would ye add  
 To my (portion) but perdition?"

64. "And oh, my people!  
 This she-camel is  
 A symbol to you: <sup>1560</sup>  
 Leave her to feed  
 On God's (free) earth,  
 And inflict no harm  
 On her, or a swift Penalty  
 Will seize you!"

65. But they did ham-string her.  
 So he said: "Enjoy yourselves  
 In your homes for three days: <sup>1561</sup>  
 (Then will be your ruin):

مُرْجُوا قَبْلَ هَذَا أَتَنْهَيْنَا  
 أَنْ نَعْبُدَ مَا يَعْبُدُ آبَاؤُنَا  
 وَإِنَّا لَفِي شَكٍّ  
 مِمَّا تَدْعُونَا إِلَيْهِ مُرِيبٍ ○

٦٣- قَالَ يَقَوْمِ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُ  
 عَلَى بَيِّنَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّي وَآتَانِي مِنْهُ  
 رَحْمَةً  
 فَتَنْصُرُونِي مِنَ اللَّهِ إِنْ عَصَيْتُهُ  
 فَمَا تَزِيدُونَنِي غَيْرَ تَخْسِيرٍ ○

٦٤- وَيَقَوْمِ هَذِهِ نَاقَةُ اللَّهِ لَكُمْ  
 آيَةٌ فَذُرُّوهَا تَأْكُلْ فِي أَرْضِ اللَّهِ  
 وَلَا تَمْسُوهَا بِسَوْءٍ  
 فَيَأْخُذَكُمْ عَذَابٌ قَرِيبٌ ○

٦٥- فَعَقَرُوهَا فَقَالَ تَسْمَعُونَ فِي  
 دَارِكُمْ ثَلَاثَةَ أَيَّامٍ

1558. Salih's life with his people had been so righteous (like that of al-Amr in later times) that he might have been chosen leader or king if he had only conformed to their superstitions and supported their sins. But he was born for a higher mission—that of a preacher of truth and righteousness and an ardent opponent of selfish privilege and a champion of the rights of humanity on God's free earth by the symbol of the she-camel: see n. 1044 to vii. 73.

1559. "God has been good to me and bestowed on me His light and the inestimable privilege of carrying His mission to you. Don't you see that if I fail to carry out his mission, I shall have to answer before Him? Who can help me in that case? The only thing which you can add to my misfortunes would be total perdition in the spiritual world."

1560. Salih does not merely take up a negative attitude. He puts forward the she-camel as a Symbol: see n. 1044 to vii. 73. "Give up your selfish monopoly. Make God's gifts on this free earth available to all. Give the poor their rights, including grazing rights on common lands. Show your penitence and your new attitude by leaving this she-camel to graze freely. She is a Symbol, and therefore sacred to you." But their only reply was to defy the appeal and ham-string the camel. And so they went the way of all sinners—to total perdition.

1561. Just three days' time for further thought and repentance! But they paid no heed. A terrible earthquake came by night, preceded by a mighty rumbling blast (probably volcanic), such as is well-known in earthquake areas. It came by night and buried them in their own fortress homes, which they thought such places of security! The morning found them lying on their faces hidden from the light. How the mighty were brought low

There is a promise  
Not to be belied ! "

66. When Our Decree issued,  
We saved Ṣāliḥ and those  
Who believed with him,  
By (special) Grace from  
Ourselves—<sup>1562</sup>  
And from the Ignominy  
Of that Day. For thy Lord—  
He is the Strong One, and Able  
To enforce His Will.

67. The (mighty) Blast <sup>1568</sup> overtook  
The wrong-doers, and they  
Lay prostrate in their homes  
Before the morning,—

68. As if they had never  
Dwelt and flourished there.  
Ah! Behold! For the Thamūd  
Rejected their Lord and Cherisher!  
Ah! Behold! Removed  
(From sight) were the Thamūd! <sup>1564</sup>

ذَلِكَ وَعْدٌ عَلِيمٌ ۝

۶۶- فَلَمَّا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا بَنَيْنَا صَلْحًا  
وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِنَّا  
وَمِنْ خِزْيِ يَوْمِئِذٍ  
إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ الْقَوِيُّ الْعَزِيمُ ۝

۶۷- وَأَخَذَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا الصَّيْحَةَ  
فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي دِيَارِهِمْ جُثثِينَ ۝

۶۸- كَانُوا يَسْتَفْتِنَا  
الْأَرْنَ تَسُودُ أَكْفَرُوا لَهُمْ  
الْأَبْعَدُ الْإِسْمُودُ ۝

C. 107.—When the angels, on a mission to Sodom  
(xi. 69-95.) And Gomorrah, Cities of the Plain,  
Passed by Abraham, he entertained them  
And received from them the Good News  
Of the line of Prophets to spring from his loins.  
He tried, in his goodness of heart, to intercede  
For the wicked Cities, but they were steeped  
In Sin and past all hope of repentance.  
Lūṭ preached to them, but they flouted him  
And went to their fate, as also did Midian  
The People of Shu'aib who destroyed their commerce  
By fraudulent dealings and love of brute force.  
Marvellous are God's Mercies, and strange  
Are the ways of ungrateful man!

#### SECTION 7.

69. Here came Our Messengers  
To Abraham with glad tidings.

۶۹- وَلَقَدْ جَاءَتْ رُسُلُنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ

1562. Cf. xi. 58 above and n. 1554. For 'As'iz, see n. 2818 to xxii. 40.

1563. Cf. vii. 78 and n. 1047,—also n. 1561 above.

1564. Cf. xi. 60 above.

They said, "Peace!" He answered,  
"Peace!" and hastened  
To entertain them  
With a roasted calf.<sup>1565</sup>

قَالُوا سَلَامًا قَالَ سَلَامٌ فَمَا لَبِثَ  
أَن جَاءَ بِعِجْلٍ حَنِينٍ ○

70. But when he saw  
Their hands went not  
Towards the (meal), he felt  
Some mistrust of them,  
And conceived a fear of them.<sup>1567-A</sup>  
They said: "Fear not:  
We have been sent  
Against the people of Lūt." <sup>1566</sup>

فَلَمَّا رَأَى أَيْدِيَهُمْ لَا تَصِلُ إِلَيْهِ نَكِرَهُمْ  
وَأَوْجَسَ مِنْهُمْ خِيفَةً  
قَالُوا لَا تَخَفْ  
إِنَّا أُرْسِلْنَا إِلَى قَوْمٍ لُّوطٍ ○

71. And his wife was standing  
(There), and she laughed: <sup>1567</sup>  
But We gave her  
Glad tidings of Isaac,  
And after him, of Jacob.

وَأَمْرَأَتُهُ قَائِمَةٌ فَضَحِكَتْ  
فَبَشَّرْنَاهَا بِإِسْحَاقَ  
وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِهِ يُعْقُوبُ ○

1565. According to the sequence of Sūra vii, the next reference should be to the story of Lūt, and that story commences at xi. 77 below, but it is introduced by a brief reference to an episode in the life of his uncle Abraham, from whose seed sprang the peoples to whom Moses, Jesus, and Muḥammad Muḥafā were sent with the major Revelations. Abraham had by this time passed through the fire of persecutions in the Mesopotamian valleys; he had left behind him the ancestral idolatry of Ur of the Chaldees; he had been tried and he had triumphed over the persecution of Nimrūd; he had now taken up his residence in Canaan, from which his nephew Lot (Lūt) was called to preach to the wicked Cities of the Plain east of the Dead Sea which is itself called Baḥr Lūt. Thus prepared and sanctified, he was now ready to receive the Message that he was chosen to be the progenitor of a great line of Prophets, and that Message is now referred to.

Can we localise Nimrūd? If local tradition in place-names can be relied upon; this king must have ruled over the tract which includes the modern Nimrūd, on the Tigris, about twenty miles south of Mosul. This is the site of Assyrian ruins of great interest, but the rise of Assyria as an Empire was of course much later than the time of Abraham. The Assyrian city was called Kalakh (or Calah), and archaeological excavations carried out there have yielded valuable results, which are however irrelevant for our Commentary.

1565-A. With oriental hospitality Abraham received the strangers with a salutation of Peace, and immediately placed before them a sumptuous meal of roasted calf. The strangers were embarrassed. They were angels and did not eat. hospitality is refused in the East, it means that those who refuse it meditate no good to the would-be host. Abraham therefore had a feeling of mistrust and fear in his mind, which the strangers at once set at rest by saying that their mission was in the first place to help Lūt as a warner to the Cities of the Plain. But in the second place they had good news for Abraham: he was to be the father of great peoples!

1566. *The people of Lūt* means the people to whom Lūt was sent on his mission of warning, the people of the wicked Cities of the Plain, Sodom and Gomorrah.

1567. The narrative is very concise, and most of the details are taken for granted. We may suppose that the angels gave the news first to Abraham, who was already, according to Baiḍhawī, 120 years of age, and his wife Sarah was not far short of 100. She was probably screened according to oriental custom. She could hardly believe the news. In her scepticism (some say in her joy) she laughed. But the news was formally communicated to her that she was to be the mother of Isaac, and through Isaac, the grandmother of Jacob. Jacob was to be a fruitful tree, with his twelve sons. But hitherto Abraham had had no son, and Sarah was past the age of child-bearing. "How could it be?" she thought.

72. She said: "Alas for me!<sup>1568</sup>  
Shall I bear a child,  
Seeing I am an old woman,  
And my husband here  
Is an old man?  
That would indeed  
Be a wonderful thing!"

٤٢- قَالَتْ يَوَاسِيَ اَلَيْسَ اَنَا عَجُوزًا  
وَهَذَا اِبْنِي شَيْخًا  
اِنَّ هَذَا لَشَيْءٌ عَجِيبٌ ۝

73. They said: "Dost thou  
Wonder at God's decree?  
The grace of God  
And His blessings on you,  
Oh ye people of the house!<sup>1569</sup>  
For He is indeed  
Worthy of all praise,  
Full of all glory!"<sup>1570</sup>

٤٣- قَالُوا اَتَعْجَبِينَ مِنْ اَمْرِ اللّٰهِ  
رَضِيَ اللّٰهُ وَبَرَكَتُهُ عَلَيْكُمْ  
اَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ  
اِنَّهُ حَمِيدٌ مُّجِيدٌ ۝

74. ~~When~~ When fear had passed  
From (the mind of) Abraham  
And the glad tidings<sup>1571</sup>  
Had reached him, he  
Began to plead with Us  
For Lot's people.

٤٤- فَلَمَّا ذَهَبَ عَنْ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ الرُّؤْيَا  
وَجَاءَتْهُ الْبُشْرٰى  
يُبَاوِلُنَا فِي قَوْمِ لُوطٍ ۝

75. For Abraham was,  
Without doubt, forbearing  
(Of faults), compassionate,  
And given to look to God.<sup>1572</sup>

٤٥- اِنَّ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ لَحَمِيْدٌ  
اَوْاٰءٌ مُّنِيْبٌ ۝

76. Oh Abraham! Seek not this,  
The decree of thy Lord  
Hath gone forth: for them  
There cometh a Penalty

٤٦- يَا اِبْرٰهِيْمُ اَعْرِضْ عَنْ هٰذَا اِنَّكَ قَدْ  
جَاءَ اَمْرُ رَبِّكَ وَاٰتٰهُمْ اَتِيْنٰمُ عَذَابٍ

1568. This is as much a sigh of past regrets as of future wistfulness!

1569. *Ahl-ul-bait*—people of the house, a polite form of addressing the wife and members of the family. Blessings are here invoked on the whole family.

1570. This little episode of Abraham's life comes in fitly as one of the illustrations of God's wonderful providence in His dealings with man. Abraham had had a tussle with his father on behalf of Truth and Unity (vi. 74); he had passed through the fire of temptation unscathed (xxi. 68-69); he had travelled to far countries, and was now ready to receive his great mission as the fountain-head of apostles in his old age. Humanly speaking it seemed impossible that he should have a son at his age, and yet it came to pass and became a corner-stone of sacred history.

1571. *Glad tidings*: not only that he was to have a son, but that he was to be a fountain-head of apostles. So he now begins to plead at once for the sinful people to whom Lot was sent as a warner.

1572. Like *Muṣṭafā*, Abraham had three qualities in a pre-eminent degree, which are here mentioned: (1) he was long-suffering with other people's faults; (2) his sympathies and compassion were very wide; and (3) for every difficulty or trouble he turned to God and sought Him in prayer.

That cannot be turned back !<sup>1573</sup>

77. When Our Messengers  
Came to Lūt, he was  
Grieved on their account  
And felt himself powerless  
(To protect) them. He said :  
" This is a distressful day." <sup>1574</sup>

78. And his people came  
Rushing towards him,  
And they had been long  
In the habit of practising  
Abominations. He said :  
" Oh my people ! Here are  
My daughters : they are purer  
For you (if ye marry) !<sup>1575</sup>  
Now fear God, and cover me not  
With shame about my guests !  
Is there not among you  
A single right-minded man ? "

79. They said : " Well dost thou  
Know we have no need  
Of thy daughters : indeed  
Thou knowest quite well  
What we want ! "

80. He said : " Would that I  
Had power to suppress you

عَبْدٌ مَّرْدُودٌ ٥

« وَلَمَّا جَاءَتْ رُسُلُنَا لُوطًا  
بِئْسَ بِهِمْ وَضَاقَ بِهِمْ ذَرْعًا  
وَقَالَ هَذَا يَوْمٌ عَصِيبٌ ٥

« وَأَجَاءَهُ قَوْمُهُ يُهْرَعُونَ إِلَيْهِ  
وَمِنْ قَبْلُ كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ السَّيِّئَاتِ  
قَالَ يَفْعَلُوهَآ لَآ بَنَاتِي هُنَّ أَطْهَرُ لَكُمْ  
فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ  
وَلَا تُخْزُونِ فِي ضَيْفِي  
أَلَيْسَ مِنْكُمْ رَجُلٌ رَشِيدٌ ٥

« قَالُوا لَقَدْ عَلِمْتَ مَا لَنَا  
فِي بَنَاتِكَ مِنْ حَقٍّ  
وَإِنَّكَ لَتَتَعَلَّمُ مَا تُرِيدُ ٥  
« قَالَ لَوْ أَنَّ لِي بِكُمْ قُوَّةٌ

1573. This is a sort of prophetic apostrophe. All your care and sympathy are useless, oh Abraham ! All your warning, oh Lūt, will be unheeded ! Alas ! they are so deep in sin that nothing will reclaim them ! This is illustrated in verse 79 below. And now we proceed to Lūt and how he was dealt with by the wicked.

1574. The story of Lot, as referred to in vii. 80-84, laid emphasis on the rejection of Lot's mission by men who practised unnatural abominations. See n. 1049 to vii. 80. Here the emphasis is laid on God's dealings with men—in mercy for true spiritual service and in righteous wrath and punishment for those who defy the laws of nature established by Him ;—also on men's dealings with each other and the contrast between the righteous and the wicked who respect no laws human or divine.

1575. The Biblical narrative suggests that the daughters were married and their husbands were close by (Gen. xix. 14) and that these same daughters afterwards committed incest with their father and had children by him (Gen. xix. 31). The holy Qurān nowhere suggests such abominations. Some Commentators suggest that " my daughters " in the mouth of a venerable man like Lūt, the father of his people, may mean any young girls of those Towns. " My son " (*waladī*) is still a common mode of address in Arabic-speaking countries when an elderly man addresses a young man.



Or that I could betake  
Myself to some powerful  
support."<sup>1576</sup>

81. (The Messengers) said : " Oh Lūt !  
We are Messengers from thy  
Lord !

By no means shall they  
Reach thee ! Now travel  
With thy family while yet  
A part of the night remains,  
And let not any of you  
Look back : but thy wife <sup>1577</sup>  
(Will remain behind) :  
To her will happen  
What happens to the people.  
Morning is their time appointed :  
Is not the morning nigh ? "

82. When Our decree issued,  
We turned (the cities)  
Upside down, and rained down  
On them brimstones <sup>1578</sup>  
Hard as baked clay, <sup>1579</sup>  
Spread, layer on layer,—

83. Marked as from thy Lord : <sup>1580</sup>

أَوْ أَوِّحَ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ شَدِيدٍ ۝

٨١- قَالُوا يَلُوطُ إِنَّا رُسُلُ رَبِّكَ  
لَنْ يَصْلَوْا إِلَيْكَ  
فَأَسِرْ بِأَهْلِكَ يَفْطِرْ مِنَ الْبَيْتِ  
وَلَا يَكْنُفْ مِنْكُمْ أَحَدٌ إِلَّا أَمْرًا تَكُ  
إِنَّكَ مُصِيبُهُمَا مَا أَصَابَهُمْ  
إِنْ مَوْعِدُهُمُ الضُّبُرُ  
أَلَيْسَ الضُّبُرُ بِقَرِيبٍ ۝

٨٢- فَلَمَّا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا  
جَعَلْنَا عَلَيْهَا سَافِلَهَا وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهَا  
حِجَارَةً مِنْ سِجِّيلٍ مُنْقُودٍ  
٨٣- مُسَوَّمَةً عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ

1576. Lot seemed helpless in the situation in which he found himself,—alone against a rabble of people inflamed with evil passions. He wished he had had the strength to suppress them himself or had had some powerful support to lean on ! But the powerful support was there, though he had not realised it till then. It was the support of God. His guests were not ordinary men, but Angels who had come to test the people before they inflicted the punishment. They now declared themselves, and gave him directions to get away before the morning, when the punishment would descend on the doomed Cities of the Plain.

1577. Even in Lot's household was one who detracted from the harmony of the family. She was disobedient to her husband, and he was here obeying God's Command. She looked back and shared the fate of the wicked inhabitants of the Cities of the Plain : see also lxvi. 10. The Biblical narrative suggests that she was turned into a pillar of salt (Gen. xix. 26).

1578. Cf. vii. 84 and n. 1052.

1579. *Sijjil*, a Persian word Arabicised, from *Sang-o-gil*, or *Sang-i-gil*, stone and clay, or hard as baked clay, according to the Qamūs. Sodom and Gomorrah were in a tract of hard, caky, sulphurous soil, to which this description well applies. Cf. li. 33, where the words are "stones of clay" (*ḥijārat min sijjil*) in connection with the same incident. On the other hand, in cv. 4, the word *sijjil* is used for pellets of hard-baked clay in connection with Abrahā and the Companions of the Elephant.

1580. If we take the words literally, they would mean that the showers of brimstones were marked with the destiny of the wicked as decreed by God. But would it not be better to take them figuratively, to mean that the shower of brimstones was especially appointed in God's Decree or Plan to mark the punishment for the crimes of Sodom and Gomorrah ?

Nor are they <sup>1581</sup> ever far  
From those who do wrong!

### SECTION 8.

84. ~~To~~ the Madyan people <sup>1582</sup>  
(We sent) Shu'aib, one  
Of their own brethren : he said :  
"Oh my people! worship God :  
Ye have no other god  
But Him. And give not  
Short measure or weight :  
I see you in prosperity, <sup>1583</sup>  
But I fear for you  
The Penalty of a Day  
That will compass (you) all round.

85. "And oh my people! give  
Just measure and weight,  
Nor withhold from the people  
The things that are their due : <sup>1584</sup>  
Commit not evil in the land  
With intent to do mischief.

86. "That which is left you  
By God is best for you, <sup>1585</sup>

وَمَا هِيَ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ بِبَعِيدٍ ۝

٨٢- وَآلَىٰ مَدْيَنَ أَخَاهُمْ شُعَيْبًا  
قَالَ يَقُومُوا عِبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ  
عَدُوًّا

وَلَا تَنْقُصُوا الْمِكْيَالَ وَالْمِيزَانَ  
إِنِّي أَنَا بَصِيرُ  
وَأِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ تُحْجَرُونَ ۝

٨٥- وَيَقُومُوا أَوْفُوا الْمِكْيَالَ وَالْمِيزَانَ  
بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا تَبْخُسُوا النَّاسَ أَشْيَاءَهُمْ  
وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ ۝

٨٦- بِقِيَّتِ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ

1581. *They* : Arabic, *hiya* : some Commentators take the pronoun to refer to the wicked cities so destroyed: the meaning then would be: those wicked cities were not so different from other cities that do wrong, for they would all suffer similar punishment! Perhaps it would be better to refer "they" to the stones of punishment by a metonymy for "punishment": "punishment would not be far from any people that did wrong".

1582. Cf. vii. 85-93. The location of Madyan is explained in n. 1053 to vii. 85 and the chronological place of Shu'aib in n. 1064 to vii. 93. The point of the reference here is different from that in S. vii. Here the emphasis is on God's dealings with men and men's crooked and obstinate ways: there the emphasis was rather on their treatment of their Prophet, thus throwing light on some of the sins of the Meccans in later times.

1583. The Midianites were a commercial people, and their besetting sin was commercial selfishness and fraudulent dealings in weights and measures. Their Prophet tells them that that is the surest way to cut short their "prosperity," both in the material and the spiritual sense. When the Day of Judgment comes, it will search out their dealings through and through: "it will compass them all round," and they will not be able to escape then, however much they may conceal their frauds in this world.

1584. Both Plato and Aristotle define Justice as the virtue which gives every one his due. From this point of view Justice becomes the master virtue, and includes most other virtues. It was the lack of this that ruined the Midianites. Their selfishness was "intent on mischief," i.e., spoiling other people's business by not giving them their just dues.

1585. God's Law does not require that a man should deprive himself of the things that are necessary for his own well-being and development. If he follows God's Law, what is left him after he renders to others their just dues will be not only enough, but will be the best possible provision for his own physical and spiritual growth. Even the kindness and consideration which God's Law inculcates are in the best interests of the man's own soul. But of course the kindness and consideration must be spontaneous. It must flow from the man's own will, and cannot be forced on him by the Teachers who come from God to show him the way.

If ye (but) believed !  
But I am not set  
Over you to keep watch !"

87. They said : " Oh Shu'aib !  
Does thy (religion of) prayer  
Command thee that we  
Leave off the worship which  
Our fathers practised, or  
That we leave off doing  
What we like with our property ? <sup>1586</sup>  
Truly, thou art the one  
That forbearth with faults  
And is right-minded ! <sup>1587</sup>

88. He said : " Oh my people !  
See ye whether I have  
A Clear (Sign) from my Lord,  
And He hath given me  
Sustenance (pure and) good <sup>1588</sup>  
As from Himself ? I wish not,  
In opposition to you, to do  
That which I forbid you to do.  
I only desire (your) betterment  
To the best of my power ;  
And my success (in my task)  
Can only come from God.  
In Him I trust,  
And unto Him I look.

89. " And oh my people !  
Let not my dissent (from you) <sup>1589</sup>

إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ؕ  
وَمَا أَنَا عَلَيْكُمْ بِحَفِيظٍ ۝

٨٧- قَالُوا يَشْعَبُ أَصْلُكَ  
تَأْمُرُكَ أَنْ تَتْرَكَ  
مَا يَعْبُدُ آبَاؤُنَا  
أَوْ أَنْ تَفْعَلَ فِي أَمْوَالِنَا مَا نَشَاءُ  
إِنَّكَ لَكَا نَفْسٌ مُنْكَرَةٌ ۝

٨٨- قَالَ يَقُولُونَ إِنْ كَانَ  
عَلَيْهِ بَيِّنَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّي  
وَرَزَقْنِي مِنْهُ رِزْقًا حَسَنًا  
وَمَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ أَمْلِكَكُمْ إِلَىٰ مَا أَنْتُمْ  
عِنْدَهُ إِنْ أُرِيدُ إِلَّا الْإِصْلَاحَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُ  
وَمَا تَوْفِيقِي إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ  
عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَإِلَيْهِ أُنِيبُ ۝

٨٩- وَيَقُولُونَ لَا تَنْحَرِمْنَا مِنْكُمْ

1586. It is the way of selfish and material-minded people (1) to scoff at spiritual things like prayer and worship and (2) to hug their own property rights as if there were not other rights even greater than those of property !

1587. They grow sarcastic against Shu'aib. In effect they say : " You are a fine man ! You teach us that we must be kind and forbearing with other people's faults, and now get at what you call our sins ! You think you are the only right-minded man ! "

1588. Shu'aib's answer is gentle and persuasive. First, he would ask them not to fly into a passion but satisfy themselves that he had a mission from God, and was working in the discharge of his mission : he was not merely finding fault with them. Secondly, though he was a poor man, he asked them to note that he was happy and comfortable : God had given him good sustenance, material and spiritual, as from Himself, though he did not resort to the sort of tricks which they considered necessary for their prosperity. Thirdly, if he forbade them anything he wished to apply the same standards to himself. Fourthly, all the advice which he is giving them is for their own good, which he desires to advance to the utmost of his powers. Fifthly, he is humble for himself ; he would not set himself up to be their teacher or guide, or expect to be obeyed ; the success of any of his efforts on their behalf must come from God's grace ; will they not therefore turn to God, so that God's grace can heal them ?

1589. Finally, Shu'aib appeals to them as man to man. " Because I differ from you, do not think I do not love you or feel for you. Let it not drive you into obstinacy and sin. I see things that you do not. My vision takes in the fate of previous generations who sinned and perished on account of their sins. Turn therefore to God in repentance."

Cause you to sin,  
Lest ye-suffer  
A fate similar to that  
Of the people of Noah  
Or of Hūd or of Ṣāliḥ,  
Nor are the people of Lūt  
Far off from you! <sup>1590</sup>

سَقَاتِي أَنْ يُصِيبَكُمْ  
مِثْلُ مَا أَصَابَ قَوْمَ نُوحٍ  
أَوْ قَوْمَ هُودٍ أَوْ قَوْمَ صَالِحٍ  
وَمَا قَوْمُ لُوطٍ مِنْكُمْ بِبَعِيدٍ ○

90. " But ask forgiveness  
Of your Lord, and turn  
Unto Him (in repentance):  
For my Lord is indeed  
Full of mercy and loving-kindness."

۹۰- وَاسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّكُمْ  
ثُمَّ تَوْبُوا إِلَيْهِ  
إِنَّ رَبِّي رَحِيمٌ وَدُودٌ ○

91. They said : " Oh Shu'aib!  
Much of what thou sayest  
We do not understand! <sup>1591</sup>  
In fact among us we see  
That thou hast no strength!  
Were it not for thy family,  
We should certainly  
Have stoned thee!  
For thou hast among us  
No great position! " <sup>1592</sup>

۹۱- قَالُوا يَعْصِبُ مَا نَفْقَهُ  
كَثِيرًا مِمَّا تَقُولُ  
وَلَئِنْ لَمْ تَكُنْ فِينَا ضَعِيفًا  
وَلَوْ لَا رَهْطُكَ لَكُنْجُنُكُ  
وَمَا أَنْتَ عَلَيْنَا بِعَزِيزٍ ○

92. He said : " Oh my people!  
Is then my family  
Of more consideration with you  
Than God? For ye cast Him  
Away behind your backs  
(With contempt). But verily  
My Lord encompasseth  
On all sides  
All that ye do! <sup>1593</sup>

۹۲- قَالَ يَقْتُمُوا أَرْهَافِي  
أَعَزُّ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ  
وَأَتَّخِذُ نِسْوَةً وِرَاءَكُمْ ظَهْرِي  
إِنَّ رَبِّي بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ مُحِيطٌ ○

93. " And oh my people!  
Do whatever ye can :

۹۳- وَيَقُولُوا عَمَلُوا عَلَى مَكَانَتِكُمْ

1590. The generation of Lūt was not far off from the generation of Shu'aib chronologically if Shu'aib was only in the fourth generation from Abraham (see n. 1064 to vii. 93). Nor was its habitat geographically far from that of Shu'aib, as the Midianites wandered about from Sinai Peninsula to the Jordan valley (see n. 1053 to vii. 85).

1591. Spiritual things are easy to understand if we bring the right mind to them. But those who are contemptuous of them deliberately shut their eyes to God's Signs, and then pretend in their superior arrogance that they are 'quite beyond them'!

1592. What they do understand is brute strength. They practically say: "Don't you see that we have all the power and influence, and you, Shu'aib, are only a poor Teacher? We could stone you or imprison you or do what we like with you! Thank us for our kindness that we spare you—for the sake of your family: It is more than you yourself deserve!"

I will do (my part) : <sup>1894</sup>  
 Soon will ye know  
 Who it is on whom  
 Descends the Penalty  
 Of ignominy, and who  
 Is a liar !  
 And watch ye !  
 For I too am watching  
 With you ! " <sup>1895</sup>

94. When Our decree issued,  
 We saved Shu'aib and those  
 Who believed with him,  
 By (special) Mercy from  
 Ourselves : <sup>1896</sup>  
 But the (mighty) Blast did seize  
 The wrong-doers, and they  
 Lay prostrate in their homes  
 By the morning,—

95. As if they had never  
 Dwelt and flourished there ! <sup>1897</sup>  
 Ah ! Behold ! How the Madyan  
 Were removed (from sight)  
 As were removed the Thamūd !

إِنِّي عَامِلٌ  
 سَوَاتٍ تَعْمَلُونَ مَنِ يُأْتِيهِ عَذَابٌ  
 يُخْزِيهِ وَمَنْ هُوَ كَاذِبٌ  
 وَأَنْتُمْ بِنَايَ مَعَكُمْ رَقِيبٌ ۝

٩٤- وَلَمَّا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا نَجَّيْنَا شُعَيْبًا  
 وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ  
 بِرَحْمَةٍ مِنَّا  
 وَأَخَذَتِ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا الصَّيْحَةَ  
 فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي دِيَارِهِمْ جَثْوِينَ ۝

٩٥- كَانَ كَأَن لَّمْ يَغْنَوْا فِيهَا  
 الْآبَعْدَ الْآبَعْدِينَ كَمَا بَعَدَتْ ثَمُودُ ۝

- C. 108—How the arrogant Pharaoh misled his people  
 (xi. 96-123.) In resisting God's Message through Moses !  
 Thus did they ruin themselves ! It was they  
 Who wronged themselves : for God is ever kind  
 And His punishments are just. All men  
 Will be brought to His Judgment-seat, and the good  
 Will be rewarded with bliss as the evil  
 Will be consigned to misery. Eschew evil ;  
 Stand firm in righteousness ; be not immersed  
 In the lusts of this world. Learn from the stories  
 Of the past, and seek the Lord's Mercy :  
 Trust Him and serve and praise Him for ever !

1594. Cf. vi. 135 and n. 957.

1595. If the wicked will continue to blaspheme and mock, what can the godly say but this?—" Watch and wait ! God's Plan works without fail ! I have faith, and I too will watch with you for its fulfilment." Cf. x. 102, and n. 1484.

1596. Cf. xi. 66 and xi. 58, n. 1554.

1597. Cf. xi. 67-68. The blast was probably the tremendous noise which accompanies volcanic eruptions.





Except by His leave :  
Of those (gathered) some  
Will be wretched and some  
Will be blessed.<sup>1606</sup>

إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ قَبْلَهُمْ  
شَرِيقٌ وَسَعِيدٌ ۝

106. Those who are wretched  
Shall be in the Fire:  
There will be for them  
Therein (nothing but) the heaving  
Of sighs and sobs : <sup>1607</sup>

۱۰۶- فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ شَقُّوا نَفْسَ النَّارِ  
لَهُمْ فِيهَا زَفِيرٌ وَشَهِيقٌ ۝

107. They will dwell therein <sup>1608</sup>  
For all the time that  
The heavens and the earth  
Endure, except as thy Lord  
Willeth: for thy Lord  
Is the (sure) Accomplisher  
Of what He planneth.

۱۰۷- خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا مَا دَامَتِ  
السَّمَوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ رَبُّكَ  
إِنَّ رَبَّكَ فَاعِلٌ لِّمَا يُرِيدُ ۝

108. And those who are blessed  
Shall be in the Garden:  
They will dwell therein <sup>1609</sup>  
For all the time that  
The heavens and the earth  
Endure, except as thy Lord  
Willeth: a gift without break. <sup>1610</sup>

۱۰۸- وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ سُعِدُوا فَيُفِي الْجَنَّةِ  
خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا مَا دَامَتِ  
السَّمَوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ رَبُّكَ  
عَطَاءٌ غَيْرُ مَجْذُوذٍ ۝

1606. *Shaqī* (wretched) and *Sa'īd* (blessed) have become almost technical theological terms. They are explained in the four following verses.

1607. The first word, *Zafīr*, translated "sighs", is applied to one part in the process of the braying of an ass, when he emits a deep breath. The second, *Shahīq*, translated "sobs", is the other process in the braying of an ass, when he draws in a long breath. This suggestion of an animal proverbial for his folly implies that the wicked, in spite of their arrogance and insolence in this world below, will at last realise that they have been fools after all, throwing away their own chances whenever they got them. In lxvii. 7 the word *Shahīq* is applied to the tremendous roaring in-take or devouring of Hell-fire.

1608 *Khālidīn*: This is the word which is usually translated "dwell for ever" or "dwell for aye". Here it is definitely connected with two conditions, viz.: (1) as long as the heavens and the earth endure, and (2) except as God wills. Some Muslim theologians deduce from this the conclusion that the penalties referred to are not eternal, because the heavens and the earth as we see them are not eternal, and the punishments for the deeds of a life that will end should not be such as will never end. The majority of Muslim theologians reject this view. They hold that the heavens and the earth here referred to are not those we see now, but others that will be eternal. They agree that God's Will is unlimited in scope and power, but that It has willed that the rewards and punishments of the Day of Judgment will be eternal. This is not the place to enter into this tremendous controversy.

1609. Exactly the same arguments apply as in the last note.

1610. The felicity will be uninterrupted, unlike any joy or happiness which we can imagine in this life and which is subject to chances and changes, as our daily experience shows.



109. Be not then in doubt  
As to what these men  
Worship. They worship  
nothing<sup>1611</sup>  
But what their fathers worshipped  
Before (them): but verily  
We shall pay them back  
(In full) their portion<sup>1612</sup>  
Without (the least) abatement.

## SECTION 10.

110. We certainly gave the Book  
To Moses, but differences  
Arose therein: had it not been  
That a Word had gone forth  
Before from thy Lord, the matter  
Would have been decided<sup>1613</sup>  
Between them: but they  
Are in suspicious doubt  
Concerning it.<sup>1614</sup>

111. And, of a surety, to all  
Will your Lord pay back  
(In full the recompense)  
Of their deeds: for He  
Knoweth well all that they do.<sup>1615</sup>

112. Therefore stand firm (in the  
straight  
Path) as thou art commanded,—

١٠٩- فَلَا تَكُ فِي مِرْيَةٍ مِّمَّا يَعْْبُدُونَ هَؤُلَاءِ  
مَا يَعْْبُدُونَ إِلَّا  
كَمَا يَعْْبُدُ آبَاؤُهُمْ مِنْ قَبْلُ  
وَأَنَّا لَكَاؤُهُمْ نُصِيبُهُمْ غَيْرَ مَنْقُوصٍ ۝

١١٠- وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ فَاخْتَلَفَ  
فِيهِ  
وَلَوْ لَا كَلِمَةٌ  
سَبَقَتْ مِنْ رَبِّكَ لَفُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ  
وَأَنَّهُمْ لَفِي شَكٍّ مِّنْهُ مُرِيبٍ ۝

١١١- وَإِن كَلَّلْنَا لَبُوقِيَّتَهُمْ رَبُّكَ أَعْمَالَهُمْ  
إِنَّهُمْ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ ۝

١١٢- فَاسْتَقِمْ كَمَا أُمِرْتَ

1611. Their worship is not based on any spiritual attitude of mind. They merely follow the ways of their fathers.

1612. God will take fully into account all their motives in such mummery as they call worship, and they will have their full spiritual consequences in the future.

1613. Cf. x. 19. Previous revelations are not to be denied or dishonoured because those who nominally go by them have corrupted and deprived them of spiritual value by their vain controversies and disputes. It was possible to settle such disputes under the flag, as it were, of the old Revelations, but God's Plan was to revive and rejuvenate His Message through Islam, amongst a newer and younger people, unhampered by the burden of age-long prejudices.

1614. Cf. xi. 62. There is always in human affairs the conflict between the old and the new,—the worn-out system of our ancestors, and the fresh living spring of God's inspiration fitting in with new times and new surroundings. The former look upon this latter not only with intellectual doubt but with moral suspicion, as did the People of the Book upon Islam, with its fresh outlook and vigorous realistic way of looking at things.

1615. Cf. xi. 109. above, with which the argument is now connected up by recalling the characteristic word and leading to the exhortation (in the verses following) to stand firm in the right path freshly revealed.

Thou and those who with thee  
Turn (unto God); and transgress  
not  
(From the Path): for He seeth  
Well all that ye do.

وَمَنْ تَابَ مَعَكَ وَلَا تَطْغَوْا  
إِنَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ٥

113. And incline not to those  
Who do wrong, or the Fire  
Will seize you; and ye have  
No protectors other than God,  
Nor shall ye be helped.
114. And establish regular prayers  
At the two ends of the day <sup>1616</sup>  
And at the approaches of the  
night: <sup>1617</sup>  
For those things that are good  
Remove those that are evil: <sup>1618</sup>  
Be that the word of remembrance  
To those who remember  
(their Lord):

۱۱۳- وَلَا تَوَكَّلُوا إِلَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا فَتَمَسَّكُمُ  
النَّارُ وَمَا لَكُم مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ مِن أَوْلِيَاءَ  
ثُمَّ لَا تَنْصُرُون ٥

۱۱۴- وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ طَرَفَيِ النَّهَارِ  
وَزُلْفَا مِّنَ اللَّيْلِ  
إِن أَحْسَنْتَ يُذْهِبْنَ الشَّيْءَاتِ  
ذَٰلِكَ ذِكْرَىٰ لِلذَّاكِرِينَ ٥

115. And be steadfast in patience:  
For verily God will not suffer  
The reward of the righteous  
To perish.
116. Why were there not,  
Among the generations before you,  
Persons possessed of balanced <sup>1619</sup>  
Good sense, prohibiting (men)

۱۱۵- وَأَصْبِرْ  
فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضَيِّعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ٥

۱۱۶- فَلَوْلَا كَانَ مِنَ الْقُرُونِ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ  
أُولُو بَقِيَّةٍ يَنْهَوْنَ

1616. *The two ends of the day*: Morning and afternoon. The morning prayer is the *Fajr*, after the light is up but before sunrise: we thus get up betimes and begin the day with the remembrance of God and of our duty to Him, just as an ambassador might start on his journey after saluting his king and receiving his blessing. The early afternoon prayer, *ẓuhr*, is immediately after noon: we are in the midst of our daily life, and again we remember God.

1617. *Approaches of the night*: *Zulafun*, plural of *Zulfatun*, an approach, something near at hand. As Arabic has, like Greek, a dual number distinct from the plural, and the plural number is used here, and not the dual, it is reasonable to argue that at least three "approaches of the night" are meant. The late afternoon prayer, *ʿaṣr*, can be one of these three, and the evening prayer, *Magrib*, just after sunset, can be the second. The early night prayer, *ʿishā*, at supper time when the glow of sunset is disappearing, would be the third of the "approaches of the night", when we commit ourselves to God before sleep. These are the five canonical prayers of Islam.

1618. "*Those things that are good*": in this context the words refer primarily to prayers and sacred thoughts, but they include all good thoughts, good words, and good deeds. It is by them that we keep away everything that is evil, whether referring to the past, the present, or the future.

1619. *Buqīyat*: some virtue or faculty that stands assault and is lasting; balanced good sense that stands firm to virtue and is not dazzled by the lusts and pleasures of this world, and is not deterred by fear from boldly condemning wrong if it was fashionable or customary. It is leaders possessed of such character that can save a nation from disaster or perdition. The scarcity of such leaders—and the rejection of the few who stood out—brought ruin among the nations whose example has already been set out to us as a warning.

In xi, 86 the word has a more literal meaning.

From mischief in the earth—  
Except a few among them  
Whom We saved (from harm)?<sup>1620</sup>  
But the wrong-doers pursued  
The enjoyment of the good things  
Of life which were given them,  
And persisted in sin.

117. Nor would thy Lord be  
The One to destroy  
Communities for a single  
wrong-doing,<sup>1621</sup>  
If its members were likely  
To mend.

118. If thy Lord had so willed,  
He could have made mankind<sup>1622</sup>  
One People: but they  
Will not cease to dispute,

119. Except those on whom He  
Hath bestowed His Mercy:  
And for this did He create  
Them: and the Word  
Of thy Lord shall be fulfilled:  
"I will fill Hell with jinns  
And men all together."<sup>1623</sup>

عَنِ الْفَسَادِ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا  
مِمَّنْ أَنْجَيْنَا مِنْهُمْ  
وَالَّذِينَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مَا أَتَوْا فِيهِ  
وَكَانُوا بِجُرُومِهِمْ

۱۱۷- وَمَا كَانَ رَبُّكَ لِيُهْلِكَ  
الْقُرَى بِظُلْمٍ  
وَأَهْلِهَا مُصْرِحُونَ

۱۱۸- وَلَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّكَ لَجَعَلَ النَّاسَ أُمَّةً  
وَاحِدَةً وَلَا يَزَالُونَ مُخْتَلِفِينَ

۱۱۹- إِلَّا مَنْ رَحِمَ رَبُّكَ  
وَلِذَلِكَ خَلَقَهُمْ وَتَدْتُ كَلِمَةً رَبُّكَ  
لَأَمْلَأَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنَ الْجِنَّةِ  
وَالنَّاسِ أَجْمَعِينَ

1620. The exceptional men of firm virtue would have been destroyed by the wicked to whom they were an offence, had they not been saved by the grace and mercy of God. Or perhaps, but for such grace, they might themselves have succumbed to the evil around them, or been overwhelmed in the general calamity.

1621. There are different shades of interpretation for this verse. I follow *Bardhawni* in construing *zulmin* here as "a single wrong". He thinks that the wrong referred to is *shirk*, or polytheism: God will not destroy for mere wrong belief if the conduct is right. I incline to interpret in more general terms. God is Long-Suffering and Oft-Forgiving: He is too Merciful to destroy for a single wrong, if there is any hope of reclaiming the wrong-doers to repentance and amendment or right life.

1622. Cf. x. 19. All mankind might have been one. But in God's Plan man was to have a certain measure of free-will, and this made differences inevitable. This would not have mattered if all had honestly sought God. But selfishness and moral wrong came in, and people's disputations became mixed up with hatred, jealousy, and sin, except in the case of those who accepted God's grace, which saved them. The object of their creation was to raise them up spiritually by God's grace. But if they will choose the path of evil and fall into sin, God's decree must be fulfilled, and His justice will take its course. In the course of that justice Hell will be filled with men and spirits, such is the number of those who go astray.

1623. Cf. vii. 18 and vii. 179. If Satan and his evil spirits tempt men from the path of rectitude, the responsibility of the tempted, who choose the path of evil, is no less than that of the tempters, and they will both be involved in punishment together.

120. All that we relate to thee  
Of the stories of the apostles,—  
With it We make firm  
Thy heart: in them there cometh  
To thee the Truth, as well as  
An exhortation and a message  
Of remembrance to those who  
believe.<sup>1624</sup>

۱۲۰- وَكُلًّا نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الرُّسُلِ  
مَا نَبَّيْتُ بِهِ قَوْمًا  
وَإِنَّمَا نَقُصُّكَ فِي هَذِهِ الْحَقَّ  
وَمَوْعِظَةً وَذِكْرَى لِمَنْ يُؤْمِنُ ۝

121. Say to those who do not  
Believe: "Do whatever ye can:  
We shall do our part;"<sup>1624-A</sup>

۱۲۱- وَقُلْ لِلَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ اْعْمَلُوا  
عَلَىٰ مَكَانَتِكُمْ إِنَّا عَمِلُونَ ۝

122. "And wait ye!  
We too shall wait."<sup>1625</sup>

۱۲۲- وَإِن تَظُنُّوْا إِنَّا مُنْتَظِرُونَ ۝

123. To God do belong  
The unseen (secrets)  
Of the heavens and the earth,  
And to Him goeth back  
Every affair (for decision):<sup>1626</sup>  
Then worship Him,  
And put thy trust in Him:  
And thy Lord is not  
Unmindful of aught  
That ye do.

۱۲۳- وَلِلَّهِ غَيْبُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ  
وَالْأَنۢبِيَآءِ يُرۡجَعُ الْأَمۡرُ  
كُلُّهُ فَاَعۡبُدْهُ  
وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَیۡهِ  
وَمَا رَبُّكَ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعۡمَلُونَ ۝



1624. The stories of the Prophets in the Qurān are not mere narratives or histories: they involve three things: (1) they teach the highest spiritual Truth; (2) they give advice, direction, and warning, as to how we should govern our lives, and (3) they awaken our conscience and recall to us the working of God's Law in human affairs. The story of Joseph in the next Sūra is an illustration in point.

1624-A. Cf. xi. 93 and vi. 135, n. 957. 'The worst that ye can do will not defeat God's Plan; and as for us who believe, our obvious duty is to do our part as taught to us by God's revelation.'

1625. Cf. xi. 93, n. 1595, and x. 102, n. 1484. If the wicked only wait, they will see how God's Plan unfolds itself. As for those who believe, they are glad to wait in perfect confidence, because they know that God is good and merciful, as well as just and true.

1626. Cf. ii. 210. There is nothing, secret or open, in our world or in Creation, which does not depend ultimately on God's Will and Plan. Every affair goes back to Him for decision. Therefore we must worship Him and trust Him. Worship implies many things: e.g. (1) trying to understand His nature and His Will; (2) realising His goodness and glory, and His working in us; as a means to this end; (3) keeping Him in constant remembrance and celebrating His praise, to whom all praise is due; and (4) completely identifying our will with His, which means obedience to His Law, and service to Him and His creatures in all sincerity.

INTRODUCTION TO SŪRA XII (*Yūsuf*).

For the chronological place of this Sūra and the general argument of Sūra x. to xv. see Introduction to Sūra x.

In subject-matter this Sūra is entirely taken up with the story (recapitulated rather than told) of Joseph, the youngest (but one) of the twelve sons of the patriarch Jacob. The story is called the most beautiful of stories (xii. 3) for many reasons: (1) it is the most detailed of any in the Qurān; (2) it is full of human vicissitudes, and has therefore deservedly appealed to men and women of all classes; (3) it paints in vivid colours, with their spiritual implications, the most varied aspects of life—the patriarch's old age and the confidence between him and his little best-beloved son, the elder brothers' jealousy of this little son, their plot and their father's grief, the sale of the father's darling into slavery for a miserable little price, carnal love contrasted with purity and chastity, false charges, prison, the interpretation of dreams, low life and high life, Innocence raised to honour, the sweet "revenge" of Forgiveness and Benevolence, high matters of state and administration, humility in exaltation, filial love, and the beauty of Piety and Truth.

The story is similar to but not identical with the Biblical story; but the atmosphere is wholly different. The Biblical story is like a folk-tale in which morality has no place. Its tendency is to exalt the clever and financially-minded Jew against the Egyptian, and to explain certain ethnic and tribal peculiarities in later Jewish history. Joseph is shown as buying up all the cattle and the land of the poor Egyptians for the State under the stress of famine conditions, and making the Israelites "rulers" over Pharaoh's cattle. The Quranic story, on the other hand, is less a narrative than a highly spiritual sermon or allegory explaining the seeming contradictions in life, the enduring nature of virtue in a world full of flux and change, and the marvellous working of God's eternal purpose in His Plan as unfolded to us on the wide canvas of history. This aspect of the matter has been a favourite with Muslim poets and Sūfi exegetists, and is further referred to in Appendix VI (at the end of this Sūra), in connection with Jāmi's great Persian masterpiece, *Yūsuf-o-Zulāikḥā*.

*Summary.*

Life is a dream and a vision, to be explained by stories and parables, as in the perspicuous Arabic Qurān. The truth, which Joseph the man of God saw in his vision, was unpalatable to his ten half-brothers, who plotted against him and sold him into slavery to a merchant for a few pieces of silver. (xii. 1-20, and C. 109.)

Joseph was taken by the merchant into Egypt, was bought by a great Egyptian court dignitary ('Azīz), who adopted him. The dignitary's wife sought, but in vain, to attract Joseph to the delights of earthly love. His resistance brought him disgrace and imprisonment, but he taught the truth even in prison and was known for his kindness. One of his fellow-prisoners, to whom he had interpreted a dream, was released and received into favour as the King's cup-bearer. (xii. 21-42, and C. 110.)

The King had a vision, which Joseph (through the cup-bearer) got an opportunity of explaining. Joseph insisted that all the scandal that had been raised about him should be publicly cleared. He was received into favour, and was appointed *wazīr*

by the King. His half-brothers (driven by famine) came to Egypt and were treated kindly by Joseph without their knowing his identity. He asks them to bring his full brother, the youngest son, Benjamin. (xii. 43-68, and C. 111.)

Joseph detains Benjamin and by a stratagem convicts his half-brothers of their hatred and crime against himself, forgives them, and sends them to bring Jacob and the whole family from Canaan to Egypt. (xii. 69-93, and C. 112.)

Israel (Jacob) comes, is comforted, and settles in Egypt. The name of God is glorified. The truth of God endures for ever, and God's purpose is fully revealed in the Hereafter. (xii. 94-111, and C. 113.)

C. 109.—Life and Wisdom are explained by Signs,  
(xii. 1-20.) Symbols, Parables, and moving Stories,  
In the Holy Qurān. A beautiful story  
Is that of Joseph, the best-beloved son  
Of Jacob. His future greatness  
Was pre-figured in a vision, but his brothers  
Were filled with envy and hate: they plotted  
To get rid of him and threw him down  
Into a well. Some merchants found him,  
Bound for Egypt. The brothers sold him  
Into slavery for a few silver coins,—  
Him the noblest man of his age,  
Marked out by God for a destiny  
Of greatness, righteousness, and benevolence.

## Sūra XII.

Yūsuf, or Joseph.

*In the name of God, Most Gracious,  
Most Merciful.*

1. **A. I. R.**<sup>1627</sup> These are  
The Symbols<sup>1628</sup> (or Verses)  
Of the Perspicuous Book.<sup>1629</sup>
2. We have sent it down  
As an Arabic Qurān,<sup>1630</sup>  
In order that ye may  
Learn wisdom.
3. We do relate unto thee  
The most beautiful of<sup>1631</sup> stories,  
In that We reveal to thee  
This (portion of the) Qurān:  
Before this, thou too  
Wast among those  
Who knew it not.
4. Behold, Joseph said  
To his father: "Oh my father!"<sup>1632</sup>



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

ا-الر

تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ ۝

۲-إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا

لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ۝

۳-نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ أَحْسَنَ الْقَصَصِ

بِمَا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ ۝

وَأَنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الْغَافِلِينَ ۝

۴-إِذْ قَالَ يُوسُفُ لِأَبِيهِ يَا أَبَتِ

1627. For the meaning of these mystic letters, see Introduction to S. x.

1628. *Āyāt*: Signs, Symbols, verses of the Qurān. The Symbolic meaning is particularly appropriate here, as the whole of Joseph's story is a Sign or a Miracle,—a wonder-working exposition of the Plan and Purpose of God.

1629. Cf. v 17, n. 716. The predominant meaning of *Mubīn* here is: one that explains or makes things clear.

1630. *Qur-ān* means: something (1) to be read, or (2) recited, or (3) proclaimed. It may apply to a verse, or a Sūra, or to the whole Book of Revelation.

1631. *Most beautiful of stories*: see Introduction to this Sūra. Eloquence consists in conveying by a word or hint many meanings for those who can understand and wish to learn wisdom. Not only is Joseph's story "beautiful" in that sense. Joseph himself was renowned for manly beauty: the women of Egypt, called him a noble angel (xii. 31), and the beauty of his exterior form was a symbol of the beauty of his soul. Moreover, the whole of the mystic meaning of Zulaikha's love for him centres round the theme, how beauty can be falsely worshipped in a sort of disguised self indulgence, contrasted with the growth of that true love of Beauty, which casts out Self and turns to the eternal Beauty of the Soul.

1632. For the Parable all that is necessary to know about Joseph is that he was one of the Chosen Ones of God. For the story it is necessary to set down a few more details. His father was Jacob, also called Israel, the son of Isaac, the younger son of Abraham, (the elder son having been Isma'il, whose story is told in ii. 124-129). Abraham may be called the Father of the line of Semitic prophecy. Jacob had four wives. From three of them he had ten sons. In his old age he had from Rachel (Arabic *Rāḥīl*), a very beautiful woman, two sons Joseph and Benjamin (the youngest). At the time this story begins we may suppose that Joseph was about seventeen years of age. The place where Jacob and his family and his flocks were located was in Canaan, and is shown by tradition near modern Nablus (ancient Shechem), some thirty miles north of Jerusalem. The traditional site of the well into which Joseph was thrown by his brothers is still shown in the neighbourhood.

I did see eleven stars  
And the sun and the moon :  
I saw them prostrate themselves  
To me!" 1633

5. Said (the father) :

" My (dear) little son !  
Relate not thy vision  
To thy brothers, lest they  
Concoct a plot against thee : 1634  
For Satan is to man  
An avowed enemy" 1635

5. " Thus will thy Lord  
Choose thee and teach thee  
The interpretation of stories 1636  
(and events)

And perfect His favour  
To thee and to the posterity  
Of Jacob—even as He  
Perfected it to thy fathers  
Abraham and Isaac aforetime !  
For God is full of knowledge  
And wisdom." 1637

SECTION 2.

7. Verily in Joseph and his brethren  
Are Signs (or Symbols)

إِنِّي رَأَيْتُ أَحَدَ عَشَرَ كَوْكَبًا وَالشَّمْسَ وَ  
الْقَمَرَ رَأَيْتُهُمْ لِي سَاجِدِينَ ○

هـ - قَالَ يَبْنَؤُ  
لَا تَقْصُصْ رُؤْيَاكَ عَلَى إِخْوَتِكَ  
فَيَكِيدُوا لَكَ كَيْدًا  
إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ ○  
وَكَذَلِكَ يَجْتَبِيكَ رَبُّكَ وَيُعَلِّمُكَ  
مِنْ تَأْوِيلِ الْأَحَادِيثِ وَيُتِمُّ نِعْمَتَهُ  
عَلَيْكَ وَعَلَى آلٍ يَعْزُّوبٌ كَمَا  
اَتَّخَذَ عَلَى آبَائِكَ مِنْ قَبْلُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ  
إِسْحَاقَ  
إِنَّ رَبَّكَ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ○

لَقَدْ كَانَ فِي يُوسُفَ وَإِخْوَتِهِ آيَاتٌ

1633. Joseph was a mere lad of seventeen. But he was true and frank and righteous; he was a type of manly beauty and rectitude. His father loved him dearly. His half-brothers were jealous of him and hated him. His destiny was pre-figured in the vision. He was to be exalted in rank above his eleven brothers (stars) and his father and mother (sun and moon), but as the subsequent story shows, he never lost his head, but always honoured his parents and repaid his brothers' craft and hatred with forgiveness and kindness.

1634. The young lad Yūsuf was innocent and did not even know of his brothers' guile and hatred, but the father knew and warned him.

1635. The story is brought up at once to its spiritual bearing. These wicked brothers were puppets in the hands of Evil. They allowed their manhood to be subjugated by Evil, not remembering that Evil was the declared opposite or enemy of the true nature and instincts of manhood.

1636. If Joseph was to be of the elect, he must understand and interpret Signs and events aright. The imagination of the pure sees truths, which those not so endowed cannot understand. The dreams of the righteous pre-figure great events, while the dreams of the futile are mere idle futilities. Even things that happen to us are often like dreams. The righteous man receives disasters and reverses, not with blasphemies against God, but with humble devotion, seeking to ascertain His Will. Nor does he receive good fortune with arrogance, but as an opportunity for doing good, to friends and foes alike. His attitude to histories and stories is the same : he seeks the edifying material which leads to God.

1637. Whatever happens is the result of God's Will and Plan. And He is good and wise, and He knows all things. Therefore we must trust Him. In Joseph's case he could look back to his fathers, and to Abraham, the True, the Righteous, who through all adversities kept his Faith pure and undented, and won through.



For Seekers (after Truth).<sup>1638</sup>

8. They said: "Truly Joseph  
And his brother are loved  
More by our father than we:  
But we are a goodly body!<sup>1639</sup>  
Really our father is obviously  
Wandering (in his mind)!

9. "Slay ye Joseph or cast him out  
To some (unknown) land,  
That so the favour  
Of your father may be  
Given to you alone:  
(There will be time enough)  
For you to be righteous after  
that!"<sup>1640</sup>

10. Said one of them: "Slay not  
Joseph, but if ye must  
Do something, throw him down  
To the bottom of the well:  
He will be picked up  
By some caravan of travellers."<sup>1641</sup>

الشَّائِلِينَ ○

هـ - إِذْ قَالُوا لِيُوسُفُ وَأَخُوهُ أَحَبُّ  
إِلَى آبِنَا مِنَّا وَنَحْنُ عُصْبَةٌ  
إِنَّ أَبَانَا لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ ○

و - اقْتُلُوا يُوسُفَ أَوْ اطْرَحُوهُ أَرْضًا  
يُخْلُ لَكُمْ وَجْهُ أَبِيكُمْ  
وَتَكُونُوا مِنْ بَعْدِهِ  
قَوْمًا صَالِحِينَ ○

هـ - قَالَ قَائِلٌ مِنْهُمْ لَا تَقْتُلُوا يُوسُفَ  
وَالْقُوَّةَ فِي غَيْبَتِ الْبُحْبُوحَةِ بَعْضُ  
الشَّيَاطِينِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ فَعِيلِينَ ○

1638. In Joseph's story we have good and evil contrasted in so many different ways. Those in search of true spiritual knowledge can see it embodied in concrete events in this story of many facets, matching the colours of Joseph's many-coloured coat.

1639. The ten brothers not only envied and hated their innocent younger brothers Joseph and Benjamin. They despised and dishonoured their father as an ignorant old fool,—in his dotage. In reality Jacob had the wisdom to see that his young and innocent sons wanted protection and to perceive Joseph's spiritual greatness. But his wisdom, to them, was folly or madness or imbecility, because it touched their self-love, as truth often does. And they relied on the brute strength of numbers—the ten hefty brethren against old Jacob, the lad Joseph, and the boy Benjamin!

1640. There seems to be some irony here, consistent with the cynical nature of these callous, worldly-wise brethren. The goodness of Joseph was a reproach to their own wickedness. Perhaps the grieved father contrasted Joseph against them, and sometimes spoke of it: "Why don't you be good like Joseph?" This was gall and wormwood to them. Real goodness was to them nothing but a name. Perhaps it only suggested hypocrisy to them. So they plotted to get rid of Joseph. In their mean hearts they thought that would bring back their father's love whole to them. But they valued that love only for what material good they could get out of it. On the other hand their father was neither impartial or unjustly partial. He only knew the difference between gold and dross. They say in irony, "Let us first get rid of Joseph. It will be time enough then to pretend to be 'good' like him, or to repent of our crime after we have had all its benefits in material things!"

1641. One of the brethren, perhaps less cruel by nature, or perhaps more worldly-wise, said: "Why undertake the risk of blood-guiltiness?" Throw him into the well you see there! Some travellers passing by will pick him up and remove him to a far country. If not, at least we shall not have killed him." This was false casuistry, but such casuistry appeals to sinners of a certain kind of temperament. The well was apparently a dry well, deep enough to prevent him coming out, but with no water in which he could be drowned. It was God's Plan to save him alive, but not to make Joseph indebted to any of his brethren for his life!

11. They said : " Oh our father !  
Why dost thou not  
Trust us with Joseph,—  
Seeing we are indeed  
His sincere well-wishers ? 1642

١١- قَالُوا يَا أَبَانَا  
مَا لَكَ لَا تَأْتَمُنَا عَلَى يُوسُفَ  
وَأِنَّا لَهُ لَنَصِاحُونَ ○

12. " Send him with us to-morrow  
To enjoy himself and play,  
And we shall take  
Every care of him." 1643

١٢- أَرْسِلْهُ مَعَنَا غَدًا يَزْتَعْ وَيَلْعَبُ  
وَأِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ ○

13. (Jacob) said : " Really  
It saddens me that ye  
Should take him away :  
I fear lest the wolf  
Should devour him  
While ye attend not 1644  
To him."

١٣- قَالَ إِنِّي لَبِئْسُ نَبِيٍّ أَنْ تَذْهَبُوا بِهِ  
وَأَخَافُ أَنْ يَأْكُلَهُ الذِّئْبُ  
وَأَنْتُمْ عَنْهُ غَافِلُونَ ○

14. They said : " If the wolf  
Were to devour him  
While we are (so large) a party,  
Then should we indeed  
(First) have perished  
ourselves ! " 1645

١٤- قَالُوا الَّذِينَ أَكَلَهُ الذِّئْبُ  
وَلَمْ نَحْنُ عُصْبَةٌ  
إِنَّا إِذَا الْخُسِرُونَ ○

15. So they did take him away,  
And they all agreed

١٥- فَكَيْتَا ذَهَبُوا بِهِ وَاجْتَمَعُوا

1642. The plot having been formed, the brethren proceed to put it into execution. Jacob, knowing the situation, did not ordinarily trust his beloved Joseph with the brethren. The latter therefore remonstrate and feign brotherly affection

1643. They did not expect their protestations to be believed in. But they added an argument that might appeal both to Jacob and Joseph. 'They were going to give their young brother a good time. Why not let him come out with them and play and enjoy himself to his heart's content ?'

1644. Jacob did not know the precise plot, but he had strong misgivings. But how could he put off these brethren ? If they were driven to open hostility, they would be certain to cause him harm. He must deal with the brethren wisely and cautiously. He pleaded that he was an old man, and would miss Joseph and be sad without him. And after all, Joseph was not of an age to play with them. They would be attending to their own affairs, and a wolf might come and attack and kill Joseph. In saying this he was really unwillingly giving a cue to the wicked ones, for they use that very excuse in verse 17 below. Thus the wicked plot thickens, but there is a counter-plan also, which is drawing a noose of lies round the wicked ones, so that they are eventually driven into a corner, and have to confess their own guilt in verse 91 below, and through repentance obtain forgiveness.

1645. Jacob's objections as stated could be easily rebutted, and the brethren did so. They would be eleven in the party, and the ten strong and grown-up men would have to perish before the wolf could touch the young lad Joseph ! So they prevailed, as verbal arguments are apt to prevail, when events are weaving their web on quite another Plan which has nothing to do with verbal arguments. Presumably Benjamin was too young to go with them.

To throw him down  
To the bottom of the well :  
And We put into his heart <sup>1646</sup>  
(This Message): "Of a surety  
Thou shalt (one day)  
Tell them the truth  
Of this their affair  
While they know (thee) not' ... <sup>1647</sup>

أَنْ يَجْعَلُوهُ فِي غَيْبَتِ الْجُبِّ  
وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِ لَتُنَبِّئَنَّهُمْ  
بِأَمْرِهِمْ هَذَا  
وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ○

16. When they came  
To their father  
In the early part  
Of the night,  
Weeping. <sup>1648</sup>

١٦- وَجَاءُوا أَبَاهُمْ  
عِشَاءً يَبْكُونَ ○

17. They said: "Oh our father!  
We went racing with one  
another, <sup>1649</sup>  
And left Joseph with our things;  
And the wolf devoured him ...  
But thou wilt never believe us  
Even though we tell the truth." <sup>1650</sup>

١٧- قَالُوا يَا أَبَانَا إِنَّا ذَهَبْنَا نَسْتَبِقُ  
وَتَرَكْنَا يُوسُفَ عِنْدَ مَتَاعِنَا فَأَكَلَهُ  
الذِّئْبُ وَمَا أَنْتَ بِمُؤْمِنٍ لَّنَا  
وَلَوْ كُنَّا صَادِقِينَ ○

18. They stained his shirt <sup>1651</sup>  
With false blood. He said:

١٨- وَجَاءَهُ عَلَى قَمِيصِهِ بِدَمٍ كَذِبٍ ○

1646. God was with Joseph in all his difficulties, sorrows, and sufferings, as He is with all His servants who put their trust in Him. The poor lad was betrayed by his brothers, and left, perhaps to die or to be sold into slavery. But his heart was undaunted. His courage never failed him. On the contrary he had an inkling, a presentiment, of things that were to be—that his own rectitude and beauty of soul would land him on his feet, and perhaps some day, his brothers would stand in need of him, and he would be in a position to fulfil that need, and would do it gladly, putting them to shame for their present plotting and betrayal of him.

1647. This situation actually occurred when Joseph later on became the governor of Egypt and his brothers stood before him suing for his assistance although they did not know that he was their betrayed brother; see xii 89 below; also xii. 58.

1648. The plotters were ready with their false tale for their father, but in order to make it appear plausible, they came some time after sundown, to show that they had made an effort to search for their brother and save him.

1649. They wanted to make out that they were not negligent of Joseph. They were naturally having games and exercise, while the boy was left with their belongings. It was the racing that prevented them from seeing the wolf. And Jacob's fears about the wolf (xii 13 above) made them imagine that he would swallow the wolf story readily.

1650. They were surprised that Jacob received the story about the wolf with cold incredulity. So they grow petulant, put on an air of injured innocence, and bring out the blood-stained garment described in the next verse.

1651. Joseph wore a garment of many colours, described in Persian as a *qabū bū-qalamūn*. This was itself allegorical of the wonderful changes of fortune which Joseph underwent in his life. This was a special garment peculiar to Joseph. If the brethren could produce it blood-stained before their father, they thought he would be convinced that Joseph had been killed by a wild beast. But the stain on the garment was a stain of "false blood",—not the blood of Joseph, but the blood of a goat which the brethren had killed expressly for this purpose.

"Nay, but your minds  
Have made up a tale  
(That may pass) with you.<sup>1652</sup>  
(For me) patience is most fitting:  
Against that which ye assert,  
It is God (alone)  
Whose help can be sought "...

19. When there came a caravan<sup>1653</sup>  
Of travellers: they sent  
Their water-carrier (for water),  
And he let down his bucket  
(Into the well)... He said:  
"Ah there! Good news!"<sup>1654</sup>  
Here is a (fine) young man!"  
So they concealed him<sup>1655</sup>  
As a treasure! But God  
Knoweth well all that they do!<sup>1656</sup>

20. The (Brethren) sold him  
For a miserable price,—

قَالَ  
بَلْ سَوَّلَتْ لَكُمْ أَنْفُسُكُمْ أَمْراً  
فَصَبِّرْ يَتِيمٌ  
وَاللَّهُ الْمُسْتَعَانُ عَلَى مَا تَصِفُونَ ○

١٩- وَجَاءَتْ سَيَّارَةٌ  
فَأَرْسَلُوا وَارِدَهُمْ فَأَدْلَى دَلْوَةً  
قَالَ يَبَشِّرْهُ هَذَا عِلْمٌ  
وَاسْرُوءْهُ بِضَاعَتِهِ  
وَاللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ بِآيَعْمَلُونَ ○

٢٠- وَشَرَوْهُ بِثَمَنٍ

1652. Jacob saw that there had been some foul play, and he did not hesitate to say so. In effect he said: "Ah me! the tale you tell may be good enough for you, who invented it! But what about me, your aged father? What is there left in life for me now, with my beloved son gone? And yet what can I do but hold my heart in patience and implore God's assistance? I have faith, and I know that all that He does is for the best!"

1653. Then comes the caravan of unknown travellers—Midianite or Arab merchants travelling to Egypt with merchandise, such as the balm of Gilead in Trans-Jordan. In accordance with custom the caravan was preceded by advance parties to search out water and pitch a camp near. They naturally went to the well and let down their bucket. To their surprise the well was dry, but a handsome youth got into the bucket and came out in it when they hauled up the bucket!

1654. The water-carrier is surprised and taken aback, when his bucket brings up, not water, but a youth of comely appearance, innocent like an angel, with a face as bright as the sun! What is he to make of it? Anyhow, to see him is a delight! And he shouts it out as a piece of good news. Some Commentators think that "*Bushrā*", the Arabic word for "Good news", is a proper noun, the name of the companion to whom he shouted.

1655. It was a caravan of merchants, and they think of everything in terms of the money to be made out of it! Here was an unknown, unclaimed youth, of surpassing beauty, with apparently a mind as refined as was his external beauty. If he could be sold in the opulent slave markets of Memphis or whatever was the capital of the Hyksos Dynasty then ruling in Egypt (see Appendix IV following S. vii.), what a price he would fetch! They had indeed lighted upon a treasure! And they wanted to conceal him lest he was another's slave and had run away from his master who might come and claim him! The circumstances were peculiar and the merchants were cautious. *Bidhāt* = stock-in-trade; capital; money; wealth; treasure.

1656. To different minds the situation appeared different. Joseph must have felt keenly the edge of his brethren's treason. His father Jacob was lost in the sorrow of the loss of his best-beloved son. The brethren were exulting in their plan of getting rid of one whom they hated. The merchants were gloating over their gains. But the horizon of all was limited. God knew their deeds and their feelings and motives, and He was working out His own Plan. Neither the best of us nor the worst of us know whither our Destiny is leading us—how evil plots are defeated and goodness comes to its own in marvellous ways!

For a few dirhams <sup>1657</sup> counted out :  
In such low estimation  
Did they hold him ! <sup>1658</sup>

بَحْسَ دَرَاهِمَ مَعْدُودَةٍ  
وَكَانُوا فِيهِ مِنَ الزَّاهِدِينَ ۝

C. 110.—Joseph was bought by a man high at Court  
(xii. 21-42.) In Egypt, who asked his wife Zulaikhā  
To treat him with honour, with a view  
To his adoption as a son. But she burnt  
With a passion of earthly love for him.  
When Joseph refused to yield to her solicitations,  
There was trouble and scandal, and Joseph  
Had to go to prison. Here were shown  
His greatness, and kindness, and wisdom.  
The King's cup-bearer came in disgrace  
To prison. Joseph instructed him and others  
In the eternal Gospel of Unity. When released  
And restored to favour, the cup-bearer  
Forgot Joseph—for a time,—until  
It pleased God to put into Joseph's hands  
The keys of the prosperity of Egypt and the world.

### SECTION 3.

21. The man in Egypt <sup>1659</sup>  
Who bought him, said

وَقَالَ الَّذِي اشْتَرَاهُ مِنْ مِصْرَ

1657. *Dirham*; from Greek, *drachma*, a small silver coin, which varied in weight and value at different times and in different States. On the whole, it may be taken to have been a value varying from about 6d. or 8d. to 10d. or 12d. in sterling, or say a quarter-rupee to a half-rupee.

1658. There was mutual deceit on both sides. The Brethren had evidently been watching to see what happened to Joseph: when they saw the merchants take him up and hide him, they came to claim his price as a run-away slave, but dared not haggle over the price, lest their object, to get rid of him, should be defeated. The merchants were shrewd enough to doubt the claim in their own minds: but they dared not haggle lest they should lose a very valuable acquisition. And so the most precious of human lives in that age was sold into slavery for a few shillings!

1659. Joseph is now clear of his jealous brethren in the land of Canaan. The merchants take him to Egypt. In the city of Memphis (or whatever was the Egyptian capital then) he was exposed for sale by the merchants. The merchants had not miscalculated. There was a ready market for him: his handsome presence, his winning ways, his purity and innocence, his intelligence and integrity, combined with his courtesy and nobility, attracted all eyes to him. There was the keenest competition to purchase him, and in the highest Court circles. Every competitor was outbid by a high court official, who is called in verse 30 below "the 'Aziz" (the Exalted in rank). Who was he? He was probably a eunuch. The highest court officials in ancient Egypt were eunuchs. So much was this the case that the term "court officer", and "eunuch" became practically synonymous (E. B., viii. 14). The 'Aziz, we may assume, was a eunuch, and childless. His wife, whom our tradition calls Zulaikhā, was only nominally a wife. She was a virgin. Our poetical tradition says that she was a princess of the West who saw Joseph in a dream first and fell in love with him. As her dream told her that her beloved was the wazir of Egypt, her father arranged a match for her with the wazir, neither of the parties having seen the other. While, therefore, she nominally passed as the 'Aziz's wife she secretly cherished her romantic unknown love until Joseph appeared on the scene. It was natural that the 'Aziz should want to adopt Joseph as his son, and he asked Zulaikhā to mother him and treat him as an honoured member of the household.

To his wife: "Make his stay  
(Among us) honourable: <sup>1660</sup>  
Maybe he will bring us  
Much good, or we shall  
Adopt him as a son."  
Thus did We establish  
Joseph in the land, <sup>1661</sup>  
That we might teach him  
The interpretation of stories <sup>1662</sup>  
(And events). And God  
Hath full power and control  
Over His affairs; but most  
Among mankind know it not. <sup>1663</sup>

22. When Joseph attained <sup>1664</sup>  
His full manhood, We gave him

لَا مَرَاتَةَ أَكْرَمِي  
مَثْوَاهُ عَلَى أَنْ يَنْفَعَنَا  
أَوْ نَخْذَهُ وَلَكِنَّا  
وَكذلك مَكَّنَّا لِيُؤَسِّفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ  
وَلِنُعَلِّمَهُ مِنْ تَأْوِيلِ الْأَحَادِيثِ  
وَاللَّهُ غَالِبٌ عَلَى أَمْرِهِ  
وَالَّذِينَ أَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ○  
۲۲- وَلَمَّا بَلَغَ أَشُدَّهُ آتَيْنَاهُ

1660. See last note. The 'Aziz's motive was perhaps worldly. Such a handsome, attractive, intelligent son would get him more honour, dignity, power, and wealth. But Zulaikha had other feelings. Joseph was the man of her dreams! She had yet to purify her earthly passion, and to learn the true meaning of pure, spiritual love, before she could be worthy of Joseph.

1661. How unerringly God's plan works! To teach Joseph wisdom and power, he had to be tested and proved in righteousness, and advanced and established in Egypt, so that Zulaikha should be tested and purified of her dross, the women and men of Egypt should have a glimpse of God's Message, and the way prepared for Israel and his posterity to proclaim God's truth to the world and to make possible the subsequent missions of Moses and Muhammad.

1662. *Al-āḥādīth* might be stories, things imagined or related, things that happened, in life or in true dreams. To suppose that phenomenal events are the only reality is a mark of one-sided materialism. As Hamlet said to Horatio, "there are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy." External events have their own limited reality, but there are bigger realities behind them, that sometimes appear darkly in the visions of ordinary men, but more clearly in the visions of poets, seers, sages, and prophets. Joseph had to be trained in seeing the realities behind events and visions. He was hated by his brothers and sold by them into slavery; they were sending him into the land of Egypt, where he was to rule men. He loved his father dearly and was separated from him, and his mother had died early; but his affection was not blunted, but drawn to a keener edge when his benevolent work benefited millions in Egypt, and in the world. His own vision of stars, sun, and moon prostrating themselves before him, was no idle dream of a selfish fool, but the prefigurement of a power, which, used rightly, was to make his own honour an instrument of service to millions he had not seen, through men and women whose own power and dignity were sanctified through him. He was to understand the hidden meaning of what seemed futilities, blunderings, snares, evil plottings, love gone wrong, and power used tyrannically. He was to interpret truth to those who would never have reached it otherwise.

1663. Cf. "There is a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them as we will." Only, in Shakespeare, we have a vague and distant ideal, an irresolute striving, an unsuccessful attempt at getting beyond "this too, too solid flesh"! In Joseph we have the man of God, sure in faith, above all carnal motives, and advancing the destiny of mankind with a conscious purpose, as the scroll of knowledge, wisdom, and power, unfolds itself before him by the grace of God, All-Good and All-Powerful.

1664. When Joseph left Canaan, he was a young and immature lad of seventeen or eighteen but his nature was innocent and good. Through the vicissitudes of his fortune in Egypt, he grew in knowledge, judgment and power.

Power and knowledge: thus do We  
Reward those who do right.<sup>1665</sup>

حُكْمًا وَعِلْمًا وَكَذَلِكَ يُجْزَى الْمُتَّقِينَ

23. But she in whose house  
He was, sought to seduce him<sup>1666</sup>  
From his (true) self: she fastened  
The doors, and said:  
"Now come, thou (dear one)!"  
He said: "God forbid!  
Truly (thy husband) is  
My lord! he made  
My sojourn agreeable!  
Truly to no good  
Come those who do wrong!"<sup>1667</sup>

٢٣- وَارَادَتْهُ الَّتِي هُوَ فِي بَيْتِهَا عَنْ  
نَفْسِهِ  
وَعَلَقَتِ الْأَبْوَابَ  
وَقَالَتْ هَيْتَ لَكَ  
قَالَ مَعَاذَ اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ رَبِّي أَحْسَنَ مَوْلَايَ  
إِنَّهُ لَا يَفْعَلُ الظُّلْمُونَ

24. And (with passion) did she  
Desire him, and he would  
Have desired her, but that  
He saw the evidence<sup>1668</sup>  
Of his Lord: thus  
(Did We order) that We<sup>1669</sup>  
Might turn away from him  
(All) evil and shameful deeds:

٢٤- وَقَدْ هَمَّتْ بِهِ وَهَمَّ بِهَا  
لَوْلَا أَنَّ رَأَى بُرْهَانَ رَبِّهِ  
كَذَلِكَ لِنَصْرِفَ عَنْهُ  
الشُّعُورَ وَالْفُحْشَاءَ

1665. *Muhsinin*: those who do right, those who do good. Both ideas are implied. In following right conduct, you are necessarily doing good to yourself and to others. Joseph's resistance to Zulaikha's carnal love advanced her herself to a glimpse of true spiritual love.

1666. Zulaikha's true position is indicated in n. 1659 above. She loved much but her love was yet earthly, and was therefore unworthy of her and of Joseph. He had already been purified, but she was yet to be purified. Hence the conflict. However nominal her tie to her husband may have been, it was brought about by her own mistaken act, and she was bound to respect that tie and not to flout it, as her merely earthly passion impelled her to do. Not only in this was she guilty. The 'Aziz had treated Joseph with honour: he was more his guest and son than his slave. In trying to seduce Joseph in these circumstances, she was guilty of a crime against Joseph's own honour and dignity. And there was a third fault in her earthly love. True love blots Self out: it thinks more of the loved one than of the Self. Zulaikha was seeking the satisfaction of her own selfish passion, and was in treason against Joseph's pure soul and his high destiny. It was inevitable that Joseph should repel her advances.

1667. Joseph's plea in rejecting Zulaikha's love is threefold: '(1) I owe a duty, and so do you, to your husband, the 'Aziz; (2) the kindness, courtesy, and honour, with which he has treated me entitle him to more than mere gratitude from me; (3) in any case, do you not see that you are harbouring a guilty passion, and that no good can come out of guilt? We must all obey laws, human and divine.'

1668. She was blinded with passion, and his plea had no effect on her. He was human after all, and her passionate love and her beauty placed a great temptation in his path. But he had a sure refuge,—his faith in God. His spiritual eyes saw something that her eyes, blinded by passion, did not see. She thought no one saw when the doors were closed. He knew that God was there and everywhere. That made him strong, and proof against temptation.

1669. The credit of our being saved from sin is due, not to our weak earthly nature, but to God. We can only try, like Joseph, to be true and sincere; God will purify us and save us from all that is wrong. Tempted but true, we rise above ourselves.

For he was one of Our servants,  
Sincere and purified.

25. So they both raced each other  
To the door, and she  
Tore his shirt from the back: <sup>1670</sup>  
They both found her lord  
Near the door. She said:  
"What is the (fitting) punishment  
For one who formed  
An evil design against  
Thy wife, but prison  
Or a grievous chastisement?" <sup>1671</sup>

26. He said: "It was she  
That sought to seduce me—<sup>1672</sup>  
From my (true) self." And one  
Of her household saw (this)  
And bore witness, (thus):—<sup>1673</sup>  
"If it be that his shirt  
Is rent from the front, then  
Is her tale true,  
And he is a liar!"

27. "But if it be that his shirt  
Is torn from the back,

أَنْتَ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُخْلِصِينَ ○

٢٥- وَاسْتَبَقَا الْبَابَ  
وَقَدَّتْ قَيْصَصَهُ مِنْ دُبُرٍ  
وَأَقْبَمَا سَيِّدَهَا لَدَا الْبَابِ  
قَالَتْ مَا جَزَاءُ مَنْ أَرَادَ بِأَهْلِكَ سُوءًا  
إِلَّا أَنْ يُسْجَنَ أَوْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ○

٢٦- قَالَ هِيَ رَاوَدْتَنِي عَنْ نَفْسِي  
وَشَهِدَ شَاهِدٌ مِنْ أَهْلِهَا  
إِنْ كَانَ قَيْصَصُهُ قَدْ مِنْ قَبِيلٍ  
فَصَدَقَتْ  
وَهُوَ مِنَ الْكَذَّابِينَ ○

٢٧- وَإِنْ كَانَ قَيْصَصُهُ قَدْ مِنْ دُبُرٍ

1670. With Zulaikhā in her mad passion, the situation became intolerable, and Joseph made for the door. Zulaikhā ran after him to detain him. She tugged at his garment to detain him. As he was retreating, she could only catch hold of the back of his shirt, and in the struggle she tore it. He was determined to open the door and leave the place, as it was useless to argue with her in her mad passion. When the door was opened, it so happened that the 'Aziz was not far off. We need not assume that he was spying, or had any suspicions either of Zulaikhā or Joseph. In his narrow limited way he was a just man. We can imagine Zulaikhā's consternation. One guilt leads to another. She had to resort to a lie, not only to justify herself but also to have her revenge on the man who had scorned her love. Slighted love (of the physical kind) made her ferocious, and she lost all sense of right and wrong.

1671. Her lie and her accusation were plausible. Joseph was found with his dress disarranged. She wanted the inference to be drawn that he had assaulted her and she had resisted. For one in his position it was a dreadful crime. Should he not be consigned to a dungeon or at least scourged? Perhaps she hoped that in either case he would be more pliable to her designs in the future.

1672. Joseph bore himself with dignity. He was too great and noble to indulge in angry recrimination. But he had to tell the truth. And he did it with quiet simplicity, without argument or bitterness,—and not caring whether he was believed or not. 'The love game was hers, not his, and it went too far in seeking to assault his person.'

1673. In the nature of things there was no eye-witness to what had happened between them. But as there was a scene and the whole household collected, wisdom came through one who was not immediately concerned. They say it was a child. If so, it illustrates the truth that the most obvious things are not noticed by people who are excited, but are plain to simple people who remain calm. Wisdom comes often through babes and sucklings.



Then is she the liar,  
And he is telling the truth ! " 1674

28. So when he saw his shirt,—  
That it was torn at the back,—  
(Her husband) said : " Behold !  
It is a snare of you women ! " 1675  
Truly, mighty is your snare !

29. " Oh Joseph, pass this over !  
(Oh wife), ask forgiveness  
For thy sin, for truly  
Thou hast been at fault ! " 1676

#### SECTION 4.

30. Ladies said in the City :  
" The wife of the (great) 'Aziz 1677  
Is seeking to seduce her slave  
From his (true) self :  
Truly hath he inspired her  
With violent love : we see  
She is evidently going astray. " 1678

فَكَذَّبَتْ وَهُوَ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ○

٢٨- فَلَمَّا رَأَى قُبْحَ صَدْرِهِ قَدْ مِنْ دُبُرٍ

قَالَ إِنَّهُ مِنْ كَيْدِكُنَّ

إِنَّ كَيْدَكُنَّ عَظِيمٌ ○

٢٩- يُوسُفُ أَعْرَضَ عَنْ هَذَا وَاسْتَغْفَرَ

لِذُنُوبِهِ إِنَّكَ كُنْتَ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ○

٣٠- وَقَالَ نِسْوَةٌ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ امْرَأَتُ الْعَزِيزِ

تُرَادُّ قُبْحَهَا عَنْ نَفْسِهِ قَدْ شَغَفَهَا

حُبًّا إِنَّا لَنَرَاهَا فِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ ○

1674. If Joseph's shirt was torn at the back, he must obviously have been retreating, and Zulaikha must have been tugging from behind. No one could doubt who was the guilty party. Everybody saw it, and the 'Aziz was convinced.

1675. When the real fact became clear to every one, the 'Aziz as head of the household had to decide what to do. His own position was difficult, and it was made ridiculous. He was a high officer of state, say Grand Chamberlain. He was a eunuch. His dignity and rank were advanced by the so-called marriage with a high-born Princess. Was he going to proclaim to the world that Zulaikha was running after a slave? He was probably fond of her, and he saw the innocence, loyalty, and sterling merit of Joseph. He must treat the whole affair as a woman's prank,—the madness of sex-love, and the tricks and snares connected with sex-love. He must take no further action but to rate his wife and do justice to Joseph.

1676. As was only fair, he apologised to Joseph and begged him to give no further thought to the injury that had been done to him, first by the love-snare of one who was called his wife, secondly, by the utterly false charge made against him, and thirdly, by the scene, which must have been painful to a man of such spotless character as Joseph. That was not enough. He must ask Zulaikha humbly to beg Joseph's pardon for the wrong that she had done him. And he must further ask Zulaikha to consider her unbecoming conduct in itself, apart from any wrong done to Joseph. Probably Zulaikha's thoughts about this must have been bitter. What did the 'Aziz know of the burning furnace of sex-hunger? "He jests at scars who never felt a wound!"

1677. 'Aziz: title of a nobleman or officer of Court, of high rank. Considering all the circumstances, the office of Grand Chamberlain or minister may be indicated. But "'Aziz" I think is a title, not an office. I have not translated the title but left it as it is. "Excellency" or "Highness" would have specialised modern associations which I want to avoid.

1678. The 'Aziz's just, wise, and discreet conduct would have closed the particular episode of Zulaikha's guilty conduct if only Mrs. Grundy had left her alone and she had not foolishly thought of justifying her conduct to Mrs. Grundy. The 'Aziz had reproved her, and he had the right and authority so to do. He also probably understood her. Joseph by his behaviour had upheld the highest standard both for himself and for her. Perhaps, her lower love having been foiled, she was trying to search within herself, and reach out after that higher love which does not indulge the Self, but suffers all things in silence, in order that constancy might make her worthy of even the thought of Joseph. But the tongues of the throng about her must wag, and she had not been sufficiently schooled to despise their malice and their invective. They knew nothing of the secret history of her heart or the true position and teaching of Joseph. Stung by their malevolent motives, she tried to justify herself to them by a stratagem, and she fell another stage below the self-sacrifice of true spiritual love!

31. When (Zulaikhā) heard  
Of their malicious talk,  
She sent for them  
And prepared a banquet <sup>1679</sup>  
For them: she gave  
Each of them a knife:  
And she said (to Joseph),  
"Come out before them."  
When they saw him,  
They did extol him,  
And (in their amazement)  
Cut their hands: they said,  
"God preserve us! no mortal  
Is this! This is none other  
Than a noble angel!"

۳۱- فَلَمَّا سَمِعَتْ بِمَكْرِهِنَّ أَرْسَلَتْ إِلَيْهِنَّ  
وَأَعْتَدَتْ لَهُنَّ مَثْكًا  
وَأَتَتْ كُلَّ وَاحِدَةٍ مِّنْهُنَّ سِكِّينًا  
وَقَالَتْ أَخْرِجِي عَلَيْهِنَّ فَلَمَّا رَأَيْنَهُ أَكْبَرْنَهُ  
وَقَطَّعْنَ أَيْدِيَهُنَّ  
وَقُلْنَ حَاشَ إِلَهُكُمْ مَا هَذَا بَشَرًا  
إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا مَلَكٌ كَرِيمٌ ○

32. She said: "There before you  
Is the man about whom  
Ye did blame me!  
I did seek to seduce him from  
His (true) self but he did  
Firmly save himself guiltless!... <sup>1680</sup>  
And now, if he doth not  
My bidding, he shall certainly  
Be cast into prison,  
And (what is more)  
Be in the company of the vilest!"

۳۲- قَالَتْ فَذَلِكُنَ الَّذِي لُمْتُنَنِي فِيهِ  
وَلَقَدْ رَاوَدْتُهُ عَنْ نَفْسِهِ  
فَاسْتَعْصَمَ  
وَلَكِن لَّمْ يَفْعَلْ مَا امْرَأَةٌ يُسَبِّحُ  
وَلَيَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الصَّغِيرِينَ ○

1679. When her reputation began to be pulled to pieces by Mrs. Grundy, with sundry exaggerations and distortions and malicious inuendos, Zulaikhā invited all ladies in society to a grand banquet. We can imagine them reclining at ease after the manner of fashionable banquets. When dessert was reached and the talk flowed freely about the gossip and scandal which made their hostess interesting, they were just about to cut the fruit with their knives, when, behold! Joseph was brought into their midst. Imagine the consternation which his beauty caused, and the havoc it played with their hearts! "Ah!", thought Zulaikhā, "now is your hypocrisy self-exposed! What about your reproaches to me? You have yourselves so lost your self-control that you have cut your own fingers!"

1680. Zulaikhā's speech is subtle, and shows that any repentance or compunction she may have felt is blotted out by the collective crowd mentality into which she has deliberately invited herself to fall. Her speech falls into two parts, with a hiatus between, which I have marked by the punctuation mark (...). In the first part there is a note of triumph, as much as to say, "Now you see! mine was no vulgar passion! you are just as susceptible! you would have done the same thing!" Finding encouragement from their passion and their fellow-feeling, she openly avows as a woman amongst women (by a sort of freemasonry) what she would have been ashamed to acknowledge to others before. She falls a step lower and boasts of it. A step lower still, and she sneers at Joseph's innocence, his firmness in saving himself guiltless! There is a pause. The tide of passion rises still higher, and the dreadful second part of her speech begins. It is a sort of joint consultation, though she speaks in monologue. The women all agree that no man has a right to resist their solicitations. Beauty spurned is the highest crime. And so now Zulaikhā rises to the height of tragic guilt and threatens Joseph. She forgets all her finer feeling, her real love, and is overpowered by brute passion. After all, he is a slave and must obey his mistress! Or, there is prison, and the company of the vilest, instead of the caresses of beauty and fashion in high places! "Poor, deluded, fallen Zulaikhā! She sank lower than herself, in seeking the support of the crowd around her! What pain and suffering and sorrow can expiate the depth of this crime?"

## 33. He said : " Oh my Lord !

The prison is more  
To my liking than that  
To which they invite me : <sup>1681</sup>  
Unless Thou turn away  
Their snare from me,  
I should (in my youthful folly)  
Feel inclined towards them  
And join the ranks of the  
ignorant." <sup>1682</sup>

## 34. So his Lord heard him

(In his prayer), and turned  
Away from him their snare : <sup>1683</sup>  
Verily He heareth and knoweth  
(All things).

35. Then it occurred to the men, <sup>1684</sup>

After they had seen the Signs,  
(That it was best)  
To imprison him  
For a time.

٣٣- قَالَ رَبِّ  
الْيَسْبَغْنَ أَحَبَّ إِلَيَّ مِمَّا يَدْعُونَنِي إِلَيْهِ  
وَالَا تَصْرِفْ عَنِّي  
كَيْدَهُنَّ أَصْبُ إِلَيْهِنَّ  
وَإَكُنْ مِنَّ الْجَاهِلِينَ ○

٣٤- فَاسْتَجَابَ لَهُ رَبُّهُ  
فَصَرَفَ عَنْهُ كَيْدَهُنَّ  
إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ○

٣٥- ثُمَّ بَدَأَ لَهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا رَأَوُا الْآيَاتِ  
لِيَسْجُنُوهُ حَتَّىٰ حِينٍ ○

1681. "To which they invite me." Notice it is now "they" not "she". Where there was the snare of one woman before, it is now the collective snare of many women,—of womankind!

1682. Joseph's speech is characteristic. Like a true man of God, he takes refuge in God. He knows the weakness of human nature. He would not pit his own strength against the whole assault of evil. He will rely on God to turn evil away from him, and praise Him alone for any success he achieves in his fight. It is only the ignorant who do not know man's weakness and God's strength!

1683. Joseph was saved from the wiles of the women, which would have degraded him. But more, his truth and character were completely vindicated in the eyes of all concerned by the avowal of Zulaikha.

1684. When Joseph's character was completely vindicated, there was no disgrace to him in being sent to prison after that. On the contrary the blame now would attach to those who for their own selfish motives restricted his liberty for a time. As a matter of fact various motives on the part of the many actors in this divine drama converged towards that end. For Joseph prison was better than the importunities of the women, and now, not one woman, but all society women were after him. To the women themselves it looked as if that was a lever which they could use to force his compliance. Vain, deluded creatures, to think that a man of God could be forced from the path of rectitude by threats or bribes. To the 'Aziz it appeared as if it might be in Zulaikha's best interests that he should disappear from her view in prison. The decisive factor was the view of the men generally, who were alarmed at the consternation he had caused among the women. They knew that Joseph was righteous : they had seen the Signs of God in his wonderful personality and his calm and confident fortitude. But, it was argued, it was better that one man (even if righteous) should suffer in prison rather than that many should suffer from the extraordinary disturbance he was unwittingly causing in their social life. Not for the first nor for the last time did the righteous suffer plausibly for the guilt of the guilty. And so Joseph went to prison—for a time

## SECTION 5.

36. Now with him there came  
 Into the prison two young men.<sup>1685</sup>  
 Said one of them: "I see  
 Myself (in a dream)  
 Pressing wine." Said the other:  
 "I see myself (in a dream)  
 Carrying bread on my head,  
 And birds are eating thereof."<sup>1686</sup>  
 "Tell us" (they said) "the truth  
 And meaning thereof: for we  
 See thou art one  
 That doth good (to all)."<sup>1687</sup>

٣٦- وَدَخَلَ مَعَهُ السِّجْنَ فَتَيْنِ  
 قَالَ أَحَدُهُمَا لِيْ أَرَيْتِيْ أَعْبِرُ خَمْرًا  
 وَقَالَ الْآخَرُ لِيْ أَرَيْتِيْ أَحْمِلُ فَوْقَ  
 رَأْسِيْ خُبْزًا تَأْكُلُ الطَّيْرُ مِنْهُ  
 نَبِّئْنَا بِتَأْوِيلِهِ  
 إِنَّا نَرَاكَ مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ○

37. He said: "Before any food  
 Comes (in due course)  
 To feed either of you,  
 I will surely reveal  
 To you the truth  
 And meaning of this  
 Ere it come to pass:<sup>1688</sup>  
 That is part of the (Duty)  
 Which my Lord hath taught  
 me.<sup>1689</sup>  
 I have (I assure you)

٣٧- قَالَ لَا يَأْتِيكُمَا طَعَامٌ تُزْرَقَانِ  
 إِلَّا نَبَّأْتُكُمَا بِتَأْوِيلِهِ  
 قَبْلَ أَنْ يَأْتِيَكُمَا  
 ذَٰلِكُمَا مِمَّا عَلَّمَنِي رَبِّيْ إِنِّي

1685. Now opens another chapter in Joseph's life. The Plan of God develops. The wicked might plot: the weak might be swayed by specious arguments: but everything is used by the Universal Plan for its own beneficent purposes. Joseph must get into touch with Pharaoh, in order to work out the salvation of Egypt, and yet it must be through no obligation to smaller men. And he must diffuse his personality and teach the truth to men of all sorts in prison

1686. Two men came to the prison about the same time as Joseph. They were both apparently officers of the king (the Pharaoh), who had incurred his wrath. One was a cup-bearer (or butler or chief steward) whose duty was to prepare the king's wines and drinks. The other was the king's baker, whose duty was to prepare the king's bread. They were both in disgrace. The former dreamed that he was again carrying on his duties and pressing wine: the latter that he was carrying bread, but it did not reach his master, for the birds ate of it.

1687. Both these men saw the Signs of God about Joseph. They felt not only that he had wisdom, but that he was kind and benevolent, and would give of his wisdom even to strangers like themselves. They therefore told him their dreams and asked him to interpret them.

1688. The dream of one foreboded good to him, and of the other, evil to him. It was good that each should prepare for his fate. But Joseph's mission was far higher than that of merely foretelling events. He must teach the truth of God and the faith in the Hereafter to both men. He does that first before he talks of the events of their phenomenal life. And yet he does it so tenderly. He does not tantalise them. In effect he says, "You shall learn everything before our next meal, but let me first teach you Faith!"

1689. Joseph does not preach a pompous sermon, or claim any credit to himself for placing himself at their service. He is just doing his duty, and the highest good he can do to them is to teach them Faith.

Abandoned the ways  
Of a people that believe not  
In God and that (even)  
Deny the Hereafter.<sup>1690</sup>

تَرَكْتُ مِلَّةَ قَوْمٍ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَهُمْ  
بِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ كَافِرُونَ ○

38. "And I follow the ways<sup>1691</sup>  
Of my fathers,—Abraham,  
Isaac, and Jacob; and never  
Could we attribute any partners  
Whatever to God: that (comes)  
Of the grace of God to us  
And to mankind: yet  
Most men are not grateful.

۳۸- وَاتَّبَعْتُ مِلَّةَ آبَائِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْحَاقَ  
وَيَعْقُوبَ مَا كَانَ لَنَا أَنْ تُشْرِكَ بِاللَّهِ  
مِنْ شَيْءٍ ذَلِكَ مِنْ فَضْلِ اللَّهِ عَلَيْنَا وَ  
عَلَى النَّاسِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَشْكُرُونَ ○

39. "Oh my two companions<sup>1692</sup>  
Of the prison! (I ask you):  
Are many lords differing  
Among themselves better,  
Or the One God,  
Supreme and Irresistible?

۳۹- يَصَاحِبِي السِّجْنِ  
أَرَأَيْتَ أَزْوَاجٌ مُتَّفَعٍ قَوْمٌ خَيْرٌ  
أَمِ اللَّهُ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ ○

40. "If not Him, ye worship nothing  
But names which ye have  
named,—<sup>1693</sup>  
Ye and your fathers,—  
For which God hath sent you  
No authority: the Command  
Is for none but God: He

۴۰- مَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ إِلَّا أَسْمَاءُ  
سَمَّيْتُمُوهَا  
أَنْتُمْ وَآبَاؤُكُمْ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ بِهَا مِنْ  
سُلْطَانٍ إِنْ الْحُكْمُ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ ○

1690. These men were Egyptians, perhaps steeped in materialism, idolatry, and polytheism. He must teach them the Gospel of Unity. And he does it simply, by appealing to his own experience. 'I have found the Lord good: in prosperity and adversity I have been supported by Faith: in life no man can live by error or evil: perhaps one of you has done some wrong for which you find yourself here: perhaps one of you is innocent: in either case, will you not accept Faith and live for ever?'

1691. Again the same note of personal modesty. 'You may think I am as young as you, or younger. Yes, but I have the heritage of great men renowned for wisdom and truth, such as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Surely what they knew is worthy of respect. Never did they swerve a hair's breadth from the Gospel of Unity. It is not that we boast. It was God's grace that taught us and God's grace is teaching all mankind. But men show their ingratitude by inventing other so-called gods.'

1692. Note the personal touch again. 'Are we not also companions in misfortune? And may I not speak to you on terms of perfect equality,—as one prisoner to another? Well then, do you really think a conflict of heterogeneous gods is better than the One True God, Whose power is supreme and irresistible?'

1693. 'If you name other gods, they are nothing but your inventions,—names which you and your fathers put forward without any reality behind them. Who gave you authority to do any such thing? The only reality is God. Authority can come from Him alone. It is only for Him to command. And He has distinctly commanded you to worship none other than Him. That is the only religion that is right,—that has stood and will stand and endure for ever. He has revealed it at all times by His Messengers and by His Signs. If men fail to understand, it is their own fault.'

Hath commanded that ye worship  
None but Him: that is  
The right religion, but  
Most men understand not...

أَمَرَ أَنْ تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ  
الْقَيُّمُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ٥

41. "Oh my two companions <sup>1694</sup>  
Of the prison! As to one  
Of you, he will pour out  
The wine for his lord to drink: <sup>1695</sup>  
As for the other, he will  
Hang from the cross, and the <sup>birds</sup>  
Will eat from off his head. <sup>1696</sup>  
(So) hath been decreed  
That matter whereof  
Ye twain do enquire...

٣١- بِصَاحِبِي السِّجْنِ  
أَمَّا أَحَدُكُمَا فَيَسْقِي رَبَّهُ خَمْرًا  
وَأَمَّا الْآخَرُ فَيُصَلَّبُ فَتَأْكُلُ الطَّيْرُ مِنْ  
رَأْسِهِ  
قُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ الَّذِي  
فِيهِ تَسْتَفْتِينَ ٥

42. And of the two,  
To that one whom he considered  
About to be saved, he said:  
"Mention me to thy lord." <sup>1697</sup>

٣٢- وَقَالَ لِلَّذِي ظَنَّ أَنَّهُ  
لَاحِقٌ مِنْهُمَا اذْكُرْنِي عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ

1694. Having fulfilled his great duty, that touching the things of the spirit, Joseph now passes on, and comes to the things in which they were immediately interested,—the questions which they had asked him about their dreams and what they prognosticated of their immediate future. Notice how Joseph again puts himself into sympathy with them by repeating the phrase of *camaraderie*, "my two companions of the prison!" For one he has good news, and for the other, bad news. He does not mince matters or waste words. He just barely tells the truth, hoping that the higher spiritual truths of which he has spoken will appear in their eyes, too, as of more importance than mere earthly triumphs or disasters,—(in Kipling's words) "both impostors all the same."

1695. The cup-bearer had perhaps been proved innocent of the crime which had been charged against him, and was to be restored to the favour of the Pharaoh. He was to carry the cup and be the king's confidante again. How much more good he could do now, after the spiritual influence he had imbibed from Joseph the man of God! He was more fortunate in having had Joseph's company than in being restored to his intimate position with the king! Yet he was not a perfect man, as we shall see presently.

1696. For the baker, alas! he had bad news, and he tells it directly without tantalising him. Perhaps he had been found guilty—perhaps he had been really guilty—of some act of embezzlement or of joining in some palace intrigue, and he was to die a malefactor's death on the cross, followed by exposure to birds of the air—vultures pecking away at his eyes and cheeks, and all that had been his face and head! Poor man! If he was guilty, Joseph had taught him repentance, and we should like to think that he lost in this life but gained in the next. If he was innocent, the cruel death did not affect him. Joseph had shown him a higher and more lasting hope in the Hereafter.

1697. Joseph never mentioned himself in interpreting the dream, nor ever thought of himself in his kindness to his fellow-sufferers in prison. It was afterwards, when the cup-bearer's dream came true, and he was being released on being restored to favour, that we can imagine him taking an affectionate leave of Joseph, and even asking him in his elation if he could do anything for Joseph. Joseph had no need of earthly favours,—least of all, from kings or their favourites. The divine grace was enough for him. But he had great work to do, which he could not do in prison—work for Egypt and her king, and the world at large. If the cup-bearer could mention him to the king, not by way of recommendation (*sifarish*), but because the king's own justice was being violated in keeping an innocent man in prison, perhaps that might help to advance the cause of the king and of Egypt. And so he said, "Mention me to Pharaoh."

But Satan made him forget <sup>1698</sup>  
 To mention him to his lord:  
 And (Joseph) lingered in prison  
 A few (more) years. <sup>1699</sup>

فَأَنسَاهُ الشَّيْطَانُ ذِكْرَ رَبِّهِ  
 فَلَبِثَ فِي السِّجْنِ بِضْعَ سِنِينَ ۝

C. 111.—The king of Egypt saw a vision  
 (xii. 43-68.) Which none of his grandees could explain.  
 The cup-bearer referred to Joseph,  
 Who was sent for by the king. But Joseph  
 Insisted that the voice of scandal,  
 Which had pointed to him, should be declared  
 In public to be false. After Zulaikḥā  
 Had paid a splendid ungrudging tribute  
 To his truth and righteousness, he came,  
 And was invested with supreme power  
 By the king. In times of plenty he organised  
 Great reserves to meet the needs  
 Of famine. When wide-spread famine at last  
 Prevailed, his brothers came from Canaan  
 In search of corn. He treated them kindly  
 And got them to bring his youngest brother  
 Benjamin: but they knew not he was Joseph.

#### SECTION 6.

43. The king (of Egypt) said: <sup>1700</sup>

"I do see (in a vision)  
 Seven fat kine, whom seven  
 Lean ones devour,—and seven  
 Green ears of corn, and seven  
 (others)

Withered. Oh ye chiefs!  
 Expound to me my vision  
 If it be that ye can  
 Interpret visions."

۝۳ وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ إِنِّي أَرَى سَبْعَ بَقَرَاتٍ  
 سِمَانٍ يَأْكُلُهُنَّ سَبْعٌ عِجَافٌ  
 وَسَبْعَ سُنبُلَاتٍ خُضْرٍ وَأُخَرَ يَابِسَاتٍ  
 يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُ أَفْتِنِي فِي رُؤْيَايَ  
 إِنَّ كُنْتُمْ لِلرُّؤْيَا تَعْبُرُونَ ۝

1698. The eternal Plan does not put God's men under obligations to men commanding mere worldly favour or earthly power. If they are given a chance, the obligation is on the worldly men, however highly placed...In this case, the poor cup-bearer was but human. When he was in the midst of the Court, he forgot the poor fellow-prisoner languishing in prison. In this he yielded to the lower part of his nature, which is guided by Satan, the personification of evil,—a real force in our lives if we but knew it.

1699. A few (more) years: *biḥ* in Arabic signifies a small indefinite number, say up to 3, 5, 7, or 9 years.

1700. The Pharaoh is holding a Council. His confidential adviser the cup-bearer is present. The Pharaoh relates his double dream,—of seven fat kine being devoured by seven lean ones, and of seven fine full green ears of corn (presumably being devoured) by seven dry withered ears.

44. They said: "A confused medley  
Of dreams: and we are not  
Skilled in the interpretation  
Of dreams." 1701

٢٣- قَالُوا أَضْغَاثُ أَحْلَامٍ وَمَا نَحْنُ  
بِتَأْوِيلِ الْأَحْلَامِ بِعَالِمِينَ ○

45. But the man who had been  
Released, one of the two  
(Who had been in prison)  
And who now bethought him  
After (so long) a space of time,  
Said: "I will tell you  
The truth of its interpretation:  
Send ye me (therefor)." 1702

٢٤- وَقَالَ الَّذِي نَجَّاهُمَا  
وَإِذْ كَرِهَ لِقَاءَ أُمَّةٍ  
أَنَا أَنْبِئُكُمْ  
بِتَأْوِيلِهِ فَأَرْسِلُونِ ○

46. "Oh Joseph!" (he said),  
"Oh man of truth! Expound  
To us (the dream)  
Of seven fat kine  
Whom seven lean ones  
Devour, and of seven  
Green ears of corn  
And (seven) others withered:  
That I may return  
To the people, and that  
They may understand." 1703

٢٥- يُوسُفُ أَيُّهَا الصِّدِّيقُ  
أَفْتِنَا فِي سَبْعِ بَقَرَاتٍ سِمَانٍ  
يَأْكُلُهُنَّ سَبْعٌ عِجَافٌ  
وَسَبْعِ سُتُبُلَاتٍ خُضْرٍ وَأَخْرَاسٍ  
لَعَلِّي أَرْجِعُ إِلَى النَّاسِ  
لَعَلَّهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ ○

47. (Joseph) said: "For seven years  
Shall ye diligently sow

٢٦- قَالَ تَزْرَعُونَ سَبْعَ سِنِينَ

1701. No one in the Council apparently wanted to take the responsibility either of interpreting the dream, or of carrying out any measures consequent on the interpretation.

1702. At length the cup-bearer's conscience was awakened. He thought of Joseph. He (Joseph) was a truthful man, and the cup-bearer knew by personal experience how skilful he was in the interpretation of dreams. Perhaps he could get him released at this juncture by getting him to interpret the Pharaoh's dream. If he had been frank, straight, and direct, he would have mentioned Joseph at once, and presented him to Pharaoh. But he had worldly subtlety. He wanted some credit for himself, at the same time that he fulfilled an old obligation. His petty conscience would be satisfied if he got Joseph's release, but meanwhile he wanted to see how much attention he could draw to himself in the court. So he just asked permission to withdraw in order to find the interpretation. He went straight to the prison, and addressed himself to Joseph, as in the following verse.

1703. The speech must have been longer, to explain the circumstances. We are just given the points. From Joseph he conceals nothing. He knows that Joseph knows more than himself. He tells Joseph that if he got the meaning, he would go and tell the Council. It would be impertinent for the cup-bearer to hold out to Joseph, the man of God, the bribe of the hope of his release. Notice how blandly he avoids referring to his own lapse in having forgotten Joseph so long, and how the magnanimous Joseph has not a word of reproach, but gets straight on with the interpretation.



As is your wont :

And the harvests that ye reap,

Ye shall leave them in the ear,—<sup>1704</sup>

Except a little, of which

Ye shall eat.

دَابَّآ  
فَمَا حَصَدْتُمْ فَذَرُوهُ فِي سُنْبِيلِهِ  
إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِمَّا تَأْكُلُونَ ○

48. "Then will come

After that (period)

Seven dreadful (years),

Which will devour

What ye shall have laid by

In advance for them,—

(All) except a little<sup>1705</sup>

Which ye shall have

(Specially) guarded.

٢٨- ثُمَّ يَأْتِي مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ  
سَبْعٌ شِدَادٌ  
يَأْكُلْنَ مَا قَدَّمْتُمْ لَهُنَّ  
إِلَّا قَلِيلًا  
مِمَّا تَحْصِنُونَ ○

49. "Then will come

After that (period) a year

In which the people will have

Abundant water, and in which

They will press (wine and oil)."<sup>1706</sup>

٢٩- ثُمَّ يَأْتِي مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ عَامٌ  
فِيهِ يُغَاثُ النَّاسُ  
وَفِيهِ يُعْصَرُونَ ○

1704. Joseph not only shows what will happen, but, unasked, suggests the measures to be taken for dealing with the calamity when it comes. There will be seven years of abundant harvest. With diligent cultivation they should get bumper crops. Of them they should take a little for their sustenance and store the rest in the ear, the better to preserve it from the pests that attack corn-heaps when they have passed through the threshing floor.

1705. There will follow seven years of dreadful famine, which will devour all the stores which they will have laid by in the good years. They must be careful, even during the famine, not to consume all the grain; they must by special arrangement save a little for seed, lest they should be helpless even when the Nile brought down abundant waters from the rains at its sources.

1706. This is a symbol of a very abundant year, following the seven years of drought. The Nile must have brought abundant fertilising waters and silt from its upper reaches, and there was probably some rain also in Lower Egypt. The vine and the olive trees, which must have suffered in the drought, now revived, and yielded their juice and their oil; among the annuals, also, the oil seeds, such as linseed, sesamum, and the castor oil plant, must have been grown, as there was irrigated land and to spare from the abundant grain crops. And the people's spirits revived, to enjoy the finer products of the earth, when their absolute necessities had been more than met in their grain crops.

## SECTION 7.

50. So the king said:

"Bring ye him unto me." 1707

But when the messenger  
Came to him, (Joseph) said:  
"Go thou back to thy lord,  
And ask him, 'What is  
The state of mind  
Of the ladies  
Who cut their hands' ?" 1708  
For my Lord is  
Certainly well aware  
Of their snare." 1709

٥- وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ اِشْعُوْنِي بِهِ

فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُ الرَّسُوْلُ قَالَ

اَرْجِعْ اِلَى رَبِّكَ

فَسْأَلْهُ مَا بَالُ الرَّسُوْلَةِ الَّتِي

قَطَعْنَ اَيْدِيَهُنَّ

اِنَّ رَبِّي بِكَيْدِهِنَّ عَلِيْمٌ ٥

51. (The king) said (to the ladies):

"What was your affair

When ye did seek to seduce  
Joseph from his (true) self ?" 1710  
The ladies said: "God  
Preserve us! no evil

٥- قَالَ مَا خَطْبُكُنَّ

اِذْ رَاوُدُّنَّ يُوسُفَ عَنْ نَفْسِهِ

فَلَنْ حَاشَ لِلّٰهِ مَا عَلِمْنَا عَلَيْهِ مِنْ سُوْءٍ

1707. The cup-bearer must have reported Joseph's interpretation to the king, and the king naturally wanted to see Joseph himself. He sent a messenger to fetch him.

1708. The king's messenger must have expected that a prisoner would be only too overjoyed at the summons of the king. But Joseph, sure of himself, wanted some assurance that he would be safe from the sort of nagging and persecution to which he had been subjected by the ladies. We saw in verse 33 above that he preferred prison to their solicitations. He must therefore know what was in the mind of the women now. Note how discreetly he omits any particular mention of Zulaikhā, who after all had been kind to him, and whose unschooled love had been tested all these years and been nearly purified of its grosser elements by now. But Mrs. Grundy, who understood (and perhaps practised for herself only the grosser side of her passion, must be put in her place, if Joseph was to have a chance of doing the great work for which he was marked out.

1709. If the king ("thy lord") did not know of all the snares which had been laid for Joseph by the ladies, God ("my Lord") knew all their secret motives and plots.

1710. Joseph's message was conveyed by the messenger to the king, who sent for the ladies concerned. Among them came Zulaikhā. "What was this affair?" said the king: "tell me the whole truth."

Know we against him!"  
 Said the 'Aziz's wife:  
 "Now is the truth manifest  
 (To all): it was I  
 Who sought to seduce him  
 From his (true) self:  
 He is indeed of those  
 Who are (ever) true (and  
 virtuous).<sup>1711</sup>

قَالَتِ امْرَأَتُ الْعَزِيزِ  
 اَلْنَّ حَضَعَصَ الْحَقُّ  
 اَنَا رَاوَدْتُهُ عَنْ نَفْسِهِ  
 وَرَأَيْتَهُ لِمَنِ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ ۝

52. "This (say I), in order that  
 He may know that I  
 Have never been false  
 To him in his absence,  
 And that God will never  
 12 Guide the snare of the false  
 30 ones.<sup>1712</sup>

۵۲- ذٰلِكَ لِيَعْلَمَ اَنِّي  
 لَمْ اُخْنَهُ بِالْغَيْبِ  
 وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَهْدِي كَيْدَ الْخٰٓائِنِيْنَ ۝

1711. Zulaikha stood by, while the other ladies answered. Their answer was the answer of Mrs. Grundy, grudgingly acknowledging the truth of Joseph's innocence and high principles, but holding a discreet silence about Mrs. Grundy's own part in egging on poor Zulaikha to sin, wrong-doing, and revenge. When they had done, she began. She did not mince matters. She acknowledged her own guilt, freely and frankly. This was no time for her even to refer to other ladies,—their jealousy, their gross-mindedness, their encouragement of all that was frail or evil in herself. These things she ignored. But to her awakened spiritual consciousness it was a triumph that Joseph, whom she adored, was true in every sense, in word and deed, and that that truth should be proclaimed in open Court before all, as was indeed already known to all concerned when she had taken the blame on herself before the assembly of ladies, and her own spirit had not yet been emancipated. What had happened to her since? She had learnt much in sorrow, pain, and humiliation. She had learnt the vanity of carnal love. But Joseph, true of heart, calm in every turn of fortune, had taught her to question herself whether, in spite of all her sin, she could not yet be worthy of him. Perhaps her husband was dead, and she a widow. But she must see whether she could understand love in the sense in which Joseph would have her understand it—that pure surrender of self, which has no earthly stain to it!

1712. I construe verses 52 and 53 to be a continuation of Zulaikha's speech and have translated accordingly. There is both good reason and authority (e.g. Ibn Kathir) for this. But the majority of Commentators construe verses 52-53 to be spoken by Joseph, in which case they would mean that Joseph was referring to his fidelity to the 'Aziz, that he had never taken advantage of his absence to play false with his wife, although he (Joseph) was human and liable to err. In my view Zulaikha, while fully reprobating her own guilty conduct, claims that she has at least been constant, and that she hopes for mercy, forgiveness, and the capacity to understand at last what true love is. Whatever false charge she made, she made it in a moment of passion and to his face, never in cold blood, or behind his back.

*Guide the snare of the false ones, i.e., allow such snare to attain its goal.*

53. "Nor do I absolve my own self  
(Of guilt): the (human) soul  
Is certainly prone to evil;  
Unless my Lord do bestow  
His Mercy: but surely  
My Lord is Oft-Forgiving,  
Most Merciful." 1713

٥٣- وَمَا أَبْرِئُ نَفْسِي  
إِنَّ النَّفْسَ لَرَمَّاءٌ بِالشُّوءِ  
لَا مَا رَجِمَ رَبِّي  
إِنِّي رَبِّي غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

54. So the king said:  
"Bring him unto me; 1714  
I will take him specially.  
To serve about my own person."  
Therefore when he had spoken  
To him, he said:  
"Be assured this day,  
Thou art, before our own Presence,  
With rank firmly established,  
And fidelity fully proved!" 1715

٥٤- وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ افْعَلْنِي بِهِ  
أَسْتَخْلِصُهُ لِنَفْسِي  
فَلَمَّا كَلَّمَهُ قَالَ  
إِنَّكَ الْيَوْمَ لَدَيْنَا  
مَكِينٌ أَمِينٌ

55. (Joseph) said: "Set me  
Over the store-houses 1716  
Of the land: I will  
Indeed guard them,

٥٥- قَالَ اجْعَلْنِي عَلَى خَزَائِنِ الْأَرْضِ  
إِنِّي حَفِيظٌ

1713. See last note. I construe this verse to be a continuation of Zulaikhā's speech. It is more appropriate to her than to Joseph. As I understand it, Zulaikhā has at last come to have a realisation of all that had been wrong in her conduct and a glimmering of the true meaning of spiritual love, which has something divine in it, and which cannot be attained except by the outpouring of all our soul to God.

1714. Joseph had not yet appeared before the king. The king's order in the same terms in verse 50 above had led to a message from Joseph and the subsequent public proceedings with the ladies. Now that Joseph's innocence, wisdom, truth, and trustworthiness had been proved, and confirmed by Zulaikhā's splendid tribute, and Joseph's own manly bearing before the king, the king was much impressed, and took him specially to serve about his own person as his trusty and confidential Wazir. If, as is probable, the 'Aziz had by this time died (for he is never mentioned again) Joseph succeeded to his office, and he is addressed as 'Aziz in verse 78 below. But Joseph got more than his rank and powers, as specially selected to carry out a great emergency policy to meet the very difficult times of depression that were foretold. He was given plenary powers and the fullest confidence that a king could give to his most trusted and best-proved Wazir or Prime Minister, with special access to his Person, like a Grand Chamberlain.

1715. Who was this Pharaoh, and what approximate date could we assign to him? He was probably a king of the Hyksos Dynasty, somewhere between the 19th and the 17th century B.C. See Appendix IV, on Egyptian Chronology and Israel (printed after S. vii).

1716. Joseph had been given plenary authority by the king. He could have enjoyed his dignity, drawn his emoluments, put the hard and perhaps unpopular work on the shoulders of others, and kept to himself the glitter and the kudos. But that was not his way, nor can it indeed be the way of any one who wants to do real service. He undertook the hardest and most unpopular task himself. Such a task was that of organising reserves in times of plenty, against the lean years to come. He deliberately asked to be put in charge of the granaries and store-houses, and the drudgery of establishing them and guarding them, for the simple reason that he understood that need better than anyone else, and was prepared to take upon himself rather than throw on to another the obloquy of restricting supplies in times of plenty.

As one that knows  
(Their importance)."

56. Thus did we give  
Established power to Joseph  
In the land, to take possession<sup>1717</sup>  
Therein as, when, or where  
He pleased. We bestow  
Of Our mercy on whom  
We please, and We suffer not,  
To be lost, the reward  
Of those who do good.

57. But verily the reward  
Of the Hereafter  
Is the best, for those  
Who believe, and are constant  
In righteousness.<sup>1718</sup>

#### SECTION 8.

58. When came Joseph's  
brethren:<sup>1719</sup>  
They entered his presence,  
And he knew them,  
But they knew him not.

عليه

٥٦- وَكَذَلِكَ مَكَّنَّا لِيُوسُفَ  
فِي الْأَرْضِ يَتَّبِعُوا مِنْهَا حَيْثُ يَشَاءُ  
نُصِيبُ بِرَحْمَتِنَا مَنْ نَشَاءُ  
وَلَا نُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

٥٧- وَلَا أَجْرَ الْآخِرَةِ خَيْرٌ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا  
وَكَانُوا يُتَّقُونَ

٥٨- وَجَاءَ إِخْوَةُ يُوسُفَ فَدَخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ  
فَعَرَفَهُمْ وَهُمْ لَهُ مُنْكَرُونَ

1717. What a wonderful example of the working of divine Providence! The boy whom his jealous brothers got rid of by selling him into slavery for a miserable price becomes the most trusted dignitary in a foreign land, chief minister in one of the greatest empires of the world of that day. And this not for himself only, but for his family, for the world at large, and for that noble example of righteousness and strenuous service, which he was to set for all time. According to tradition, Joseph's age was barely 30 at that time!

As, *when, or where he pleased*: *hailhu* refers to manner, time, or place. He had a Dictator's powers, but as his fidelity was fully proved (xii. 53)<sup>1718</sup> these powers were for service rather than for self.

1718. To the righteous, whatever rewards (if any) that come in this world are welcome for the opportunities of service which they open out. But the true and best reward is in the Hereafter.

1719. Years pass; the times of prosperity go by; famine holds the land in its grip; and it extends to neighbouring countries. Joseph's preparations are complete. His reserves are ample to meet the calamity. Not only does Egypt bless him, but neighbouring countries sent to Egypt to purchase corn. All are received with hospitality, and corn is sold to them according to judicious measure.

Now there has been one sorrow gnawing at Joseph's heart. His poor father Jacob! How he must have wept, as indeed he did, at the loss of his beloved Joseph! And Joseph's little brother Benjamin, born of the same mother as himself; would the other ten brothers, not by the same mother, have any affection for him, or would they treat him, as they treated Joseph? How would the whole family be in these hard times? A sort of answer came when the ten selfish brothers, driven by famine, came from Canaan to buy corn. Joseph, though so great a man, kept the details of the famine department in his own hands: otherwise there might have been waste. But to the public he was a mighty Egyptian administrator, probably in Egyptian dress, and with all the paraphernalia of his rank about him. When his brothers came, he knew them, but they did not know he was Joseph. In their thoughts Joseph was probably some menial slave in a remote household, perhaps already starved to death in these hard times!

59. And when he had furnished  
Them forth with provisions  
(Suitable) for them, he said:  
"Bring unto me a brother  
Ye have, of the same father  
As yourselves, (but a different  
mother):  
See ye not that I pay out  
Full measure, and that I  
Do provide the best hospitality? 1720

60. "Now if ye bring him not  
To me, ye shall have  
No measure (of corn) from me,  
Nor shall ye (even) come  
Near me."

61. They said: "We shall  
Certainly seek to get  
Our wish about him  
From his father: 1721  
Indeed we shall do it."

62. And (Joseph) told his servants  
To put their stock-in-trade 1722  
(With which they had bartered)  
Into their saddle-bags,  
So they should know it  
When they returned to their  
people,

٥٩- وَلَمَّا جَهَّزَهُمْ بِجَهَّازِهِمْ  
قَالَ اسْتَوْفُوا بِهَاءِ  
لَكُمْ مِنْ أَبِيكُمْ  
أَلَا تَرَوْنَ أَنِّي أُوفِي الْكَيْلَ  
وَأَنَا خَيْرُ الْمُنْزِلِينَ ○

٦٠- فَإِنْ لَمْ تَأْتُونِي بِهِ  
فَلَا كَيْلَ لَكُمْ عِنْدِي  
وَلَا تَقْرُبُونِ ○

٦١- قَالُوا سَأَلُوهُ عَنْهُ أَبَاهُ  
وَرَأَيْنَا كَفْعًا ○

٦٢- وَقَالَ يَفْتَئِدُهُ اجْعَلُوا بِضَاعَتَهُمْ فِي  
رِحَالِهِمْ  
لَعَلَّهُمْ يَعْرِفُونَهَا  
إِذَا انْقَلَبُوا إِلَى أَهْلِهِمْ

1720. Joseph treated his brothers liberally. Perhaps he condescended to enter into conversation with these strangers, and enquired about their family. The ten brothers had come. Had they left a father behind them? What sort of a person was he? Very aged? Well, of course he could not come. Had they any other brothers? Doubtless the ten brothers said nothing about their lost Joseph, or told some lie about him. But perhaps their host's kindly insistence brought Benjamin into the conversation. How old was he? Why had they not brought him? Would they bring him next time? Indeed they must, or they would get no more corn, and he—the great Egyptian Wazir—would not even see them.

1721. The brothers said: "Certainly, we shall try to beg him of our father, and bring him away with us: we shall certainly comply with your desire." In reality, they probably loved Benjamin no more than they loved Joseph. But they must get food when the present supply was exhausted, and they must humour the great Egyptian Wazir. Note that they do not call Jacob "our father" but "his father": how little they loved their aged father, whom they identified with Joseph and Benjamin! Their trial and their instruction in their duties is now being undertaken by Joseph.

1722. *Bid'at*: stock-in-trade; capital with which business is carried on; money when it is used as capital for trade. It is better here to suppose that they were bartering goods for grain. Cf. xii. 19.

In order that they  
Might come back.<sup>1723</sup>

63. Now when they returned  
To their father, they said:  
"Oh our father! No more  
Measure of grain shall we get  
(Unless we take our brother):  
So send our brother with us,  
That we may get our measure;  
And we will indeed  
Take great care of him." <sup>1724</sup>

64. He said: "Shall I trust you  
With him with any result  
Other than when I trusted you  
With his brother aforetime?  
But God is the best  
To take care (of him),  
And He is the Most Merciful  
Of those who show mercy!" <sup>1725</sup>

65. When when they opened  
Their baggage, they found  
Their stock-in-trade had been  
Returned to them. They said:  
"Oh our father! What (more)  
Can we desire? This our  
Stock-in-trade has been  
<sup>returned</sup> <sup>1726</sup>  
To us: so we shall get

لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ ○

١٣- فَلَمَّا رَجَعُوا إِلَىٰ أَبِيهِمْ قَالُوا  
يَا أَبَانَا مَنِيْعٌ مِنَّا الْبَيْعُ  
فَلَا يَسِلُّ مَعَنَا أَخَانَا نَكْتَلُ  
وَرَأَيْنَا لَهُ لَاحِظُونَ ○

١٤- قَالَ هَلْ أَمْنٌكُمْ عَلَيْهِ إِلَّا  
كَمَا أَمْنْتُكُمْ عَلَىٰ أَخِيهِ مِنْ قَبْلُ  
قَالَ اللَّهُ خَيْرٌ حِفْظًا  
وَهُوَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ ○

١٥- وَلَمَّا فَتَحُوا مَتَاعَهُمْ وَجَدُوا  
بِضَاعَتَهُمْ رُدَّتْ إِلَيْهِمْ  
قَالُوا يَا أَبَانَا مَا نَبْغِي  
هَذِهِ بِضَاعَتُنَا رُدَّتْ إِلَيْنَا

1723. It was most important for Joseph's plan that they should come back. If they came back at all, they could not come without Benjamin after what he had told them. As an additional incentive to their coming back, he returns the price of the grain in such a way that they should find it in their saddle-bags when they reach home.

1724. On their return they no doubt told Jacob all that had transpired. But to beg Benjamin of him was no easy matter, as Jacob did not trust them and had no cause to trust them after their treatment of Joseph. So they use the argument of urgent necessity for all it is worth.

1725. I construe Jacob's answer to be a flat refusal to let Benjamin go with them. It would be like the former occasion when he trusted Joseph with them and they lost him. Did they talk of taking care of him? The only protection that he trusted was that of God. He at least showed mercy to old and young alike. Did man show such mercy? Witness his sad old age and his lost little Joseph! Would they bring down "his grey hairs with sorrow to the grave"?

1726. The ten brothers did not take their father's refusal as final. They opened their saddle-bags, and found that the price they had paid for their provisions had been returned to them. They had got the grain free! What more could they desire? The spell which Joseph had woven now worked. If they only went back, this kind Wazir would give more grain if they pleased him. And the only way to please him was to take back their younger brother with them. It would cost them nothing. Judging by past experience they would get a whole camel's load of grain now. And so they stated their case to the aged father.

(More) food for our family ;  
We shall take care of our brother ;  
And add (at the same time)  
A full camel's load (of grain  
To our provisions).  
This is but a small quantity.<sup>1727</sup>

وَنُؤَيِّرُ أَهْلَنَا وَنَحْفَظُ أَخَانَا  
وَنَزِدُّكَ أُكَيْلَ بَعْجَةٍ  
ذَلِكَ كَيْلٌ يَسِيرٌ ○

66. (Jacob) said : " Never will I  
Send him with you until  
Ye swear a solemn oath,  
In God's name, that ye  
Will be sure to bring him back  
To me unless ye are yourselves  
Hemmed in (and made  
powerless).<sup>1728</sup>  
And when they had sworn  
Their solemn oath,  
He said : " Over all  
That we say, be God  
The Witness and Guardian ! "<sup>1729</sup>

٦٦- قَالَ لَنْ أَرْسِلَهُ مَعَكُمْ حَتَّى  
تُؤْتُوا مَوْثِقًا مِنَ اللَّهِ  
لَتَأْتُنِي بِهِ  
إِلَّا أَنْ يُلْحَظَ بِكُمْ  
فَلَمَّا آتَوْهُ مَوْثِقَهُمْ  
قَالَ اللَّهُ عَلَى مَا تَقُولُ وَكِيلٌ ○

67. Further he said :  
" Oh my sons ! enter not<sup>1730</sup>  
All by one gate : enter ye  
By different gates. Not that

٦٧- وَقَالَ يَبْنَى لَا تَدْخُلُوا  
مِنْ بَابٍ وَاحِدٍ وَأَدْخُلُوا مِنْ أَبْوَابٍ مُتَفَرِّقَةٍ

1727. Two meanings are possible,—either or perhaps both. ' What we have brought now is nothing compared to what we shall get if we humour the whim of the Egyptian Wazir. And, moreover, Egypt seems to have plenty of grain stored up. What is a camel-load to her Wazir to give away ? '

1728. The appeal to the family's needs in the time of famine at length made Jacob relent, but he exacted a solemn promise from the brothers, under the most religious sanctions, that they would bring Benjamin back to him, unless they were themselves prevented, as the Insurance Policies say, " by an act of God," so that they became really powerless. To that promise Jacob called God to witness.

1729. This is more than a formula. God is invoked as present and witnessing the bargain, and to Him both parties make over the affair to arrange and fulfil.

1730. The Commentators refer to a Jewish or Eastern custom or superstition which forbade members of a numerous family to go together in a mass for fear of " the evil eye ". But apart from East or West, or custom or superstition, it would be ridiculous for any large family of ten or eleven to parade together in a procession among strangers. But there was even a better reason in this particular case, which made Jacob's advice sound, and Jacob was, as stated in the next verse, a man of knowledge and experience. Here were eleven strangers dressed alike, in a dress not of the country, talking a strange language, coming in a time of stress, on an errand for which they had no credentials. Would they not attract undue attention and suspicion if they went together ? Would they not be taken for spies ?—or for men bent on some mischief, theft or organised crime ? Such a suspicion is referred to in verse 73 below. By entering separately they would attract little attention. Jacob very wisely tells them to take all human precautions. But like a man of God he warns them that human precautions would be no good if they neglect or run counter to far weightier matters—God's Will and Law. Above all, they must try to understand and obey this, and their trust should be on God rather than on human usages, institutions, or precautions, however good and reasonable these might be.



I can profit you 'aught  
Against God (with my advice):  
None can command except God:  
On Him do I put my trust:  
And let all that trust  
Put their trust on Him."

وَمَا أَخْفَى عَنْكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ  
إِنْ أَنْصَرْتُمْ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَعَلَيْهِ  
فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُتَوَكِّلُونَ

68. And when they entered  
In the manner their father  
Had enjoined, it did not  
Profit them in the least  
Against (the Plan of) God:<sup>1731</sup>  
It was but a necessity  
Of Jacob's soul, which he<sup>1732</sup>  
Discharged. For he was,  
By Our instruction, full  
Of knowledge (and experience):  
But most men know not.<sup>1733</sup>

٦٨- وَلَمَّا دَخَلُوا مِنْ حَيْثُ أَمَرَهُمْ أَبُوهُمْ  
مَا كَانَ يُغْنِي عَنْهُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ  
إِلَّا حَاجَةً فِي نَفْسِ يَعْقُوبَ قَضَاهَا  
وَأَنَّهُ لَدُوْلِعْمًا عَلَّمْنَاهُ  
وَلَكِنْ أَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

C. 112.—When the brothers went back without Benjamin,  
(xii. 69-93.) Jacob was overwhelmed with grief, but he bore

His affliction with patience and faith in God.  
He refused to be comforted and sent his sons back,  
To Egypt. At last Joseph revealed himself,  
Forgave them, and sent his shirt by them  
To Jacob, to tell him the good news  
That Joseph lived and did great work  
In Egypt, and had sent for his whole family  
To come and rejoice and live in the land  
Of Egypt, and be a blessing to all.

1731. See the last verse and n. 1730. Though they scrupulously observed their father's injunctions to the letter, their hearts were not yet pure, and they got into trouble, as the later story will show. They had the hardihood to cast aspersions on Joseph, not knowing that they were in Joseph's power. And Joseph took a noble revenge by planning a reunion of the whole family and shaming the ten brothers into repentance. He was the instrument for the fulfilment of God's Plan.

1732. It is a necessity of a Prophet's soul that he should speak out and teach all that he knows, to the worthy and unworthy alike. This Jacob did to his unworthy sons, as well as to his worthy sons whom he loved best. It was not for him as a Prophet to guarantee any results. In this case he could not save his sons from getting into trouble merely because they followed the letter of his advice in a small matter. Apply this to the teaching of a greater than Jacob. Men who literally observe some small injunctions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad and neglect the greater principles which he taught cannot blame him for their troubles and difficulties. If they examined the matter, they would find that they brought the troubles on themselves.

1733. The men of God are full of knowledge,—not as men, but as taught by the grace of God. For men, as such, are (as Carlyle said) mostly fools,—devoid of knowledge and understanding.

## SECTION 9.

69. Now when they came  
Into Joseph's presence,<sup>1734</sup>  
He received his (full) brother<sup>1735</sup>  
To stay with him. He said  
(To him): "Behold! I am thy (own)  
Brother; so grieve not  
At aught of their doings."<sup>1736</sup>

70. At length when he had furnished  
Them forth with provisions  
(Suitable) for them, he put  
The drinking cup into  
His brother's saddle-bag.  
Then shouted out a Crier:  
"Oh ye (in) the Caravan!  
Behold! ye are thieves,  
Without doubt!"<sup>1737</sup>

71. They said, turning towards them:  
"What is it that ye miss?"

72. They said: "We miss  
The great beaker of the king;

٦٩- وَلَمَّا دَخَلُوا عَلَى يُسُفَ

أَوَى إِلَيْهِ أَخَاهُ

قَالَ إِنِّي أَنَا أَخُوكَ

فَلَا تَبْتَئِسْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ○

٧٠- فَلَمَّا جَهَّزَهُمْ بِجَهَّازِهِمْ

جَعَلَ الشِّقَايَةَ فِي رَحْلِ أَخِيهِ

ثُمَّ أَذَّنْ مُؤَذِّنٌ

أَتَيْتُهَا الْعِزْرُ إِنَّكُمْ لَسِرَّادُونَ ○

٧١- قَالُوا وَاقْبَلُوا عَلَيْهِمْ مَاذَا تَفْقَدُونَ ○

٧٢- قَالُوا نَقْصِدُ صُورَةَ الْمَلِكِ

1734. The ten brothers, with Benjamin, arrived in Egypt, and waited on the great Wazir. Joseph again received them hospitably, even more so than before, as they had complied with his request to bring Benjamin. No doubt many shrewd and probing questions were asked by Joseph, and no doubt it was clear that Benjamin was one apart from the other ten. Baïdāwī fills up the picture of the great feast for us. The guests were seated two by two. Benjamin was the odd one, and Joseph courteously took him to his own table.

1735. After the feast the question of lodgings arose. They were to be accommodated two by two. Again Benjamin was the odd one. What more natural than that the Wazir should take him to himself? He thus got a chance of privacy with him. He disclosed his identity to him, charging him to keep it a secret, and to take no notice of any strange doings that might occur. He must have learnt from Benjamin about his father and about the inner doings of the family. He must get them all together into Egypt under his own eye. He had a plan, and he proceeded to put it into execution.

1736. The past tense of *Kāna*, combined with the aorist of *Ya'malūn*, signifies that the reference is to their brother's doings, past, present, and future. Benjamin was not to mind what wrongs they had done in the past, or how they behaved in the present or the immediate future. Joseph had a plan that required Benjamin's silence in strange circumstances.

1737. Joseph's plan was to play a practical joke on them, which would achieve two objects. Immediately it would put them into some consternation, but nothing comparable to what he had suffered at their hands. When the plan was unravelled, it would make them thoroughly ashamed of themselves, and dramatically bring home their guilt to them. Secondly, it would give him an excuse to detain Benjamin and bring their aged father into Egypt. He contrived that a valuable drinking cup should be concealed in Benjamin's saddle-bag. When it was found after an ostentatious search, he would detain the supposed culprit, and attain his object, as the story relates further on.

For him who produces it,  
Is (the reward of)  
A camel load; I  
Will be bound by it."

73. (The brothers) said: "By God!  
Well ye know that we  
Came not to make mischief  
In the land, and we are  
No thieves!" 1738

74. (The Egyptians) said: "What then  
Shall be the penalty of this,  
If ye are (proved) to have  
lied?" 1739

75. They said: "The penalty  
Should be that he  
In whose saddle-bag  
It is found, should be held  
(As bondman) to atone 1740  
For the (crime). Thus it is  
We punish the wrong-doers!" 1741

76. So he 1742 began (the search)  
With their baggage,

وَلَيْسَ بِأَمْرٍ بِهِ حَبْلٌ بَعِيدٌ  
وَإِنَّا لَهُ رَعِيمٌ ٥

٤٣- قَالُوا تَاللّٰهِ لَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمْ مَّا جِئْتُمَا  
لِنُقْسِدَ فِي الْأَرْضِ  
وَمَا كُنَّا سَارِقِينَ ٥

٤٣- قَالُوا فَمَا جَزَاؤُهُ  
إِنْ كُنْتُمْ كَاذِبِينَ ٥

٤٤- قَالُوا جَزَاؤُهُ مَنْ وَجَدَ فِي رَحْلِهِ  
فَهُوَ جَزَاؤُهُ  
كَذَلِكَ تَجْزِي الظَّالِمِينَ ٥

٤٤- فَبَدَأَ بِأَوْعِيَّتِهِمْ

1738. As strangers in a strange land, they were liable to be suspected as spies or men who meditated some unlawful design, or some crime, such as theft, which would be common in a season of scarcity. The brothers protested against the absurdity of such a suspicion after they had been entertained so royally by the Wazir.

1739. "That might be all very well," said the Egyptians, "but what if it is found by a search that you have in fact abused the Wazir's hospitality by stealing a valuable cup?"

1740. We must try to picture to ourselves the mentality of the ten. They understood each other perfectly, in their sins as well as in other things. For themselves, the search held out no fears. Besides they had had no opportunity of stealing. But what of that young fellow Benjamin? They were ready to believe anything against him, the more so as the Wazir's partiality for him had lent a keen edge to their jealousy. Judging by their own standards, they would not be surprised if he had stolen, seeing that he had had such opportunities—sitting at the High Table and staying with the Wazir. They felt very self-righteous, at the same time that they indulged in the luxury of accusing in their thoughts the most innocent of men! Supposing he had stolen, here would be a fine opportunity of getting rid of him. What about their solemn oath to their father? Oh! that was covered by the exception. He had done for himself. They had done all they could to protect him, but they were powerless. The old man could come and see for himself.

1741. This was their family custom. It was of course long anterior to the Mosaic Law, which laid down full restitution for theft, and if the culprit had nothing, he was to be sold for his theft (Exod. xxii. 3). But here the crime was more than theft. It was theft, lying, and the grossest abuse of confidence and hospitality. While the ten felt a secret satisfaction in suggesting the penalty, they were unconsciously carrying out Joseph's plan. Thus the vilest motives often help in carrying out the most beneficent plans.

1742. The pronoun "he" can only refer to Joseph. He may have been present all the time, or he may just have come up, as the supposed theft of the king's own cup (xii. 72 above) was a very serious and important affair, and the investigation required his personal supervision. All that his officers did by his orders was his own act. As the lawyers say: *Qui facit per alium, facit per se* (whoever does anything through another, does it himself).

Before (he came to) the

baggage <sup>1743</sup>

Of his brother: at length  
He brought it <sup>1744</sup> out of his  
Brother's baggage. Thus did We  
Plan for Joseph. He could not  
Take his brother by the law.  
Of the king except that God <sup>1745</sup>  
Willed it (so). We raise  
To degrees (of wisdom) whom <sup>1746</sup>  
We please: but over all  
Endued with knowledge is One,  
The All-Knowing.

77. They said: "If he steals,  
There was a brother of his  
Who did steal before (him)." <sup>1747</sup>  
But these things did Joseph  
Keep locked in his heart,  
Revealing not the secrets to  
them. <sup>1748</sup>

قَبْلَ وِعَاؤِ أَخِيهِ  
ثُمَّ اسْتَخْرَجَهَا مِنْ وِعَاؤِ أَخِيهِ  
كَذَلِكَ رَدَّ نَارِيُوسُفَ  
مَا كَانَ لِيَأْخُذَ أَخَاهُ فِي دِينِ الْمَلِكِ  
إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ  
نَرْفَعُ دَرَجَاتٍ مَن نَّشَاءُ  
وَفَوْقَ كُلِّ ذِي عِلْمٍ عَلِيمٌ  
-- قَالَ الْإِنْسَانُ يُتْرَقُ فَقَدْ سَرَقَ آخَرُ  
لَهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ  
فَاسْتَرَاهَا يُوسُفُ فِي نَفْسِهِ  
وَلَمْ يُبْدِهَا لَهُمْ

1743. The Arabic word here used is *wi'ān*, plural *au'ya*, which includes bags, lockers; boxes, or any receptacles in which things are stored. Notice the appropriateness of the words used. The cup was concealed in a saddle-bag (*ruḥḥ*), verse 70 above. When it comes to searching, they must search all the baggage of every description if the search was to be convincing and effective.

1744. It refers to the drinking-cup, the *ṣiqāyat*, which is a feminine noun: hence the feminine pronoun (*hā*) in Arabic.

1745. Let no one suppose that it was a vulgar or wicked trick, such as we sometimes hear of in police courts, when property is planted on innocent men to get them into trouble. On the contrary it was a device or stratagem whose purpose was to show up wickedness in its true colour, to give it a chance of repentance, to bring about forgiveness and reconciliation, to give solace to the aged father, who had suffered so much, and above all, to further that larger plan for the instruction of the world, which is unfolded in Israel's religious history. Joseph was a man of God, but he could not have carried out this plan or taken the first step, of detaining his brother, except with the will and permission of God, Whose Plan is universal and for all His creatures.

1746. If we examine this world's affairs, there are all sorts of plans, and all degrees of folly and wisdom. The wicked ones plan; the foolish ones plan; the simple ones plan; then there are men who think themselves wise and are perhaps thought to be wise, but who are foolish, and they have their plans: and there are degrees of real and beneficent wisdom among men. God, the Universal Planner, is above all. Anything good in our wisdom is but a reflection of His wisdom, and His wisdom can even turn folly and wickedness to good.

1747. The hatred of the Ten for Joseph and Benjamin comes out again. They are not only ready to believe evil of Benjamin, but they carry their thoughts back to Joseph and call him a thief as well. They had injured Joseph; and by a false charge of this kind they salve their conscience. Little did they suspect that Joseph was before them under another guise, and their falsehood and treachery would soon be exposed.

1748. There were many secrets: (1) that he was Joseph himself; (2) that his brother Benjamin knew him; (3) that there was no guilt in Benjamin, but the whole practical joke was in furtherance of a great plan (see n. 1745 above); (4) that they were giving themselves away, and were unconsciously facilitating the plan, though their motives were not above-board.

He (simply) said (to himself):  
 "Ye are the worse situated; <sup>1749</sup>  
 And God knoweth best  
 The truth of what ye assert!"

78. They said: "Oh exalted  
 one! <sup>1750</sup>

Behold! he has a father,  
 Aged and venerable, (who will  
 Grieve for him); so take  
 One of us in his place;  
 For we see that thou art  
 (Gracious) in doing good."

79. He said: "God forbid  
 That we take other than him  
 With whom we found  
 Our property: indeed  
 (If we did so), we should  
 Be acting wrongfully. <sup>1751</sup>

#### SECTION 10.

80. Now when they saw  
 No hope of his (yielding),  
 They held a conference in private.  
 The leader among them said: <sup>1752</sup>  
 "Know ye not that your father  
 Did take an oath from you  
 In God's name, and how,  
 Before this, ye did fail

قَالَ أَنْتُمْ تَرَى مَكَانًا  
 وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا تَصِفُونَ ○

٨٠- قَالُوا يَا أَيُّهَا الْعَزِيزُ إِنَّ لَهُ أَبًا  
 شَيْخًا كَبِيرًا  
 فَخُذْ أَحَدَنَا مَكَانَهُ  
 إِنَّا نَرَاكَ مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ○

٨١- قَالَ مَعَاذَ اللَّهِ أَنْ نَأْخُذَ إِلَّا مَنْ  
 وَجَدْنَا مَتَّكِحًا عِنْدَهُ  
 إِنَّا إِذَا لَطِيفُونَ ○

٨٠- فَلَمَّا اسْتَمْتَعُوا مِنْهُ خَلَصُوا بِحَيَاتِهِ  
 قَالَ كَيْفَ هُمْ أَلَمْ تَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ أَبَاكُمْ  
 كَانَ أَخَذَ عَلَيْكُمْ مَوْثِقًا مِنَ اللَّهِ  
 وَمِنْ قَبْلُ مَا تَرَوُنَّ

1749. "Ah!" thought Joseph, "you think that Benjamin is safely out of the way, and that Joseph was got rid of long since! Would you be surprised to know that you have given yourselves away, that you are now in the power of Joseph, and that Joseph is the very instrument of your exposure and (let us hope) of your repentance?"

1750. I have translated the title of 'Aziz here as "the exalted one" when addressed to Joseph, in order not to cause confusion with the other man, the 'Aziz to whom Zulaikhā was married, and who is apparently no longer now in the land of the living. See xii. 30 above, and notes 1677 and 1714.

1751. There is a little sparring now between the Ten and Joseph. They are afraid of meeting their father's wrath, and he holds them strictly to the bargain which they had themselves suggested.

1752. *Kabīr* may mean the eldest. But in xii. 78 above, *Kabīr* is distinguished from *Shāikh*, and I have translated the one as "venerable" and the other as "aged". In xx. 71, *Kabīr* obviously means "leader" or "chief", and has no reference to age. I therefore translate here by the word "leader", that brother among them who took the most active part in these transactions. His name is not given in the Qurān. The eldest brother was Reuben. But according to the biblical story the brother who had taken the most active part in this transaction was Judah, one of the elder brothers, being the fourth son, after Reuben, Simeon, and Levi, and of the same mother as these. It was Judah who stood surety to Jacob for Benjamin (Gen. xliii. 9). It is therefore natural that Judah should, as here, offer to stay behind.

In your duty with Joseph ?  
Therefore will I not leave  
This land until my father  
Permits me, or God<sup>1753</sup>  
Commands me ; and He  
Is the best to command.

فِي يُوسُفَ فَلَئِنْ أَمَرَ الْأَرْضَ  
حَتَّى يَأْذُنَ لِي أَيْ أَوْ يَحْكُمَ اللَّهُ لِي  
وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الْحَاكِمِينَ ○

81. " Turn ye back to your father,  
And say, ' Oh our father !  
Behold ! thy son committed theft !  
We bear witness only to what  
We know, and we could not  
Well guard against the unseen !<sup>1754</sup>

٨١- اَرْجِعُوا إِلَىٰ آبَائِكُمْ فَقُولُوا يَا أَبَانَا إِنَّ  
ابْنَكَ سَرَقَ وَمَا شَهِدْنَا إِلَّا بِمَا عَلَّمَنَا  
وَمَا كُنَّا بِالْغَيْبِ حَافِظِينَ ○

82. " ' Ask at the town where  
We have been and the caravan  
In which we returned,  
And (you will find) we are  
Indeed telling the truth.' "<sup>1755</sup>

٨٢- وَسْئَلِ الْقَرْيَةَ الَّتِي كُنَّا فِيهَا  
وَالْعِيرَ الَّتِي أَقْبَلْنَا فِيهَا  
وَإِنَّا لَصَادِقُونَ ○

83. Jacob said : " Nay, but ye  
Have yourselves contrived  
A story (good enough) for you.<sup>1756</sup>  
So patience is most fitting  
(For me). Maybe God will  
Bring them (back) all  
To me (in the end).<sup>1757</sup>  
For He is indeed full  
Of knowledge and wisdom."

٨٣- قَالَ بَلْ سَوَّلَتْ لَكُمْ أَنْفُسُكُمْ أَمْراً  
فَصَبِّرْ جَبِيلٌ  
عَسَى اللَّهُ أَنْ يَأْتِيَنِي بِهِمْ جَمِيعاً  
إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ ○

1753. The pledge he had given was to his father, and in God's name. Therefore he was bound both to his father, and to God. He must await his father's orders and remain here as pledged, unless God opened out some other way. For example the Egyptian Wazir might relent : if so, he could go back with Benjamin to his father, and his pledge would be satisfied.

1754. 'He stole in secret and without our knowledge. How could we in the circumstances prevent it ?' This may have been a good statement for the other nine brothers, but Judah was himself personally and specially pledged.

1755. To vouch for the truth of the story, the nine brothers are asked by Judah to appeal to their father to enquire at the place where they stayed and the caravan with which they came, and he would find that the facts were as they stated them. The nine brothers came back and told their father as they had been instructed by Judah.

1756. Jacob was absolutely stunned by the story. He knew his darling little Benjamin too well to believe that he had committed theft. He flatly refused to believe it, and called it a cock-and-bull story, which indeed it was, though not in the sense in which he reproached the nine brothers. With the eye of faith he saw clearly the innocence of Benjamin, though he did not see every detail of what had happened.

1757. With the eye of faith he clung to even a larger hope. Perhaps all three of his lost sons would come back,—Joseph, Benjamin, and Judah. His faith in God was unswerving, although alas ! the present facts altogether unmanned him.

84. And he turned away from them,  
And said: "How great  
Is my grief for Joseph!  
And his eyes became white<sup>1758</sup>  
With sorrow, and he fell  
Into silent melancholy.

٨٤- وَتَوَلَّى عَنْهُمْ وَقَالَ يَا سَقَى عَلَى يُوسُفَ  
وَأَبْطِطْتُ عَيْنُهُ مِنَ الْحُزَنِ  
فَهُوَ كَظِيمٌ ○

85. They said: "By God!  
(Never) wilt thou cease  
To remember Joseph  
Until thou reach the last  
Extremity of illness,  
Or until thou die!"<sup>1759</sup>

٨٥- قَالُوا تَاللَّهِ تَفْتُنَا  
تَذْكُرُ يُوسُفَ حَتَّى تَكُونَ حَرَضًا أَوْ تَكُونَ  
مِنَ الْهَالِكِينَ ○

86. He said: "I only complain<sup>1760</sup>  
Of my distraction and anguish  
To God, and I know of God<sup>1761</sup>  
That which ye know not ..

٨٦- قَالَ إِنَّمَا أَشْكُوا بَيْنِي وَخِزْيَ إِلَى اللَّهِ  
وَأَعْلَمُ مِنَ اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ○

87. "Oh my sons! go ye  
And enquire about Joseph  
And his brother, and never  
Give up hope of God's  
Soothing Mercy:<sup>1762</sup> truly  
No one despairs of God's

٨٧- يَا بَنِيَّ اذْهَبُوا فَتَحَسَّسُوا مِنْ يُوسُفَ  
وَآخِيهِ وَلَا تَأْيِسُوا مِنْ رُؤُوسِ اللَّهِ  
إِنَّهُ لَا يَأْخُذُ مِنَ رُؤُوسِ اللَّهِ

1758. The old father's grief is indescribable. Yet with what master-strokes it is described here! One sorrow brings up the memory of another and a greater one. 'Benjamin is now gone! Oh but Joseph! his pretty dream of boyhood! his greatness foretold! and now how dark was the world! If he could but weep! Tears might give relief, and his red and swollen eyes might yet regain their light!' But his grief was too deep for tears. His eyes lost their colour, and became a dull white. The light became a mere blur, a white glimmer. Darkness seemed to cover everything. 'So it was in the outside world. So was it in his mind. His grief was unshared, unexpressed, and uncomplaining. Who could share it? Who could understand it? He bore his sorrow in silence. Yet his faith was undimmed, and he trimmed the lamp of patience, that sovereign virtue for those who have faith.

1759. A speech full of jealousy, taunting malice, and lack of understanding,—one that would have driven mad any one less endowed with patience and wisdom than was Jacob the man of God. It shows that the sons were still unregenerate, though the time of their repentance and reclamation was drawing nigh. The cruel heartlessness of their words is particularly out of place, as Jacob bore his sorrow in silence and complained to no mortal, but poured out his distraction and grief only to God, as stated in the next verse.

1760. Jacob's plaint to God is about himself, not about God's doings. He bewails the distraction of his mind and his occasional breaking out of those bounds of patience which he had set for himself.

1761. He knew of God's merciful and beneficent dealings with man in a way his shallow sons did not. And his perfect faith in God also told him that all would be well. He never gave up hope for Joseph, as his directions in the next verse show. They may be supposed to have been spoken after a little silence of grief and thought. That silence I have indicated in punctuation by three dots.

1762. The word is *rauh*, not *ruh*, as some translators have mistakenly construed it. *Rauh* includes the idea of a Mercy that stills or calms our distracted state, and is particularly appropriate here in the mouth of Jacob.

Soothing Mercy, except  
Those who have no faith." 1763

88. Then, when they came  
(Back) into (Joseph's) presence 1764  
They said: "Oh exalted one!  
Distress has seized us  
And our family: we have  
(Now) brought but scanty capital:  
So pay us full measure,  
(We pray thee), and treat it  
As charity to us: for God  
Doth reward the charitable."

89. He said: "Know ye  
How ye dealt with Joseph 1765  
And his brother, not knowing  
(What ye were doing)?"

90. They said: "Art thou indeed 1766  
Joseph?" He said: "I am  
Joseph, and this is my brother:  
God has indeed been gracious

إِلَّا الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرُونَ ○

٨٨- قُلْنَا دَخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ  
قَالُوا يَا أَيُّهَا الْعَزِيزُ مَسَّنَا  
وَأَهْلُنَا الضَّرُّ وَجِئْنَا بِبِضَاعَةٍ مُزْجَاةٍ  
فَاكُوفْ لَنَا الْكَفِيلَ وَتَصَدَّقْ عَلَيْنَا  
إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَجْزِي الْمُتَصَدِّقِينَ ○

٨٩- قَالَ هَلْ عَلِمْتُمْ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ بِيُوسُفَ  
وَإِخْوَتِهِ إِذْ أَنْتُمْ جَاهِلُونَ ○

٩٠- قَالُوا أَرْأَيْكَ لَأَنَّكَ يُوسُفَ قَالَ أَنَا  
يُوسُفَ وَهَذَا إِخْوَتِي قَدْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَيْنَا

1763. Jacob ignores and forgives the sting and malice in the speech of his sons, and like a true man of God, still wishes them well, gives them sound advice, and sends them on an errand which is to open their eyes to the wonderful ways of Providence as much as it will bring consolation to his own distressed soul. He asks them to go again in search of Joseph and Benjamin. Perhaps by now he had an idea that they might be together in Egypt. In any case their stock of grain is again low, and they must seek its replenishment in Egypt.

1764. The nine brothers come back to Egypt according to their father's direction. Their first care is to see the Wazir. They must tell him of all their father's distress and excite his pity, if perchance he might release Benjamin. They would describe the father's special mental distress as well as the distress which was the common lot of all in famine time. They had spent a great part of their capital and stock-in-trade. They would appeal to his charity. It might please so great a man, the absolute governor of a wealthy state. And they did so. Perhaps they mentioned their father's touching faith, and that brought Joseph out of his shell, as in the next verse.

1765. Joseph now wants to reveal himself and touch their conscience. He had but to remind them of the true facts as to their treatment of their brother Joseph, whom they pretended to have lost. He had by now also learnt from Benjamin what slights and injustice he too had suffered at their hands after Joseph's protection had been removed from him in their home. Had not Joseph himself seen them but too prone to believe the worst of Benjamin and to say the worst of Joseph? But Joseph would be charitable,—not only in the sense which they meant when they asked for a charitable grant of grain, but in a far higher sense. He would forgive them and put the most charitable construction on what they did,—that they knew not what they were doing!

1766. Their father's words, the way events were shaping themselves, Joseph's questionings, perhaps Benjamin's manner now,—not a slave kept in subjection but one in perfect love and understanding with this great Wazir,—perhaps also a recollection of Joseph's boyish dream,—all these things had prepared their minds and they ask the direct question, "Art thou Joseph?" They get the direct reply, "Yes, I am Joseph; and if you have still any doubt of my identity, here is Benjamin: ask him. We have suffered much, but patience and right conduct are at last rewarded by God!"



To us (all): behold, he that is  
Righteous and patient,—never  
Will God suffer the reward  
To be lost, of those  
Who do right."

91. They said: "By God! Indeed  
Has God preferred thee  
Above us, and we certainly  
Have been guilty of sin!" <sup>1767</sup>

92. He said: "This day  
Let no reproach be (cast) <sup>1768</sup>  
On you: God will forgive you,  
And He is the Most Merciful  
Of those who show mercy!

93. "Go with this my shirt, <sup>1769</sup>  
And cast it before the face  
Of my father: he will  
Come to see (clearly). Then come  
Ye (here) to me together  
With all your family."

إِنَّهُ مَنْ يَتَّقِ وَيَصْبِرْ  
فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ○

٩١- قَالُوا تَاللَّهِ لَقَدْ أَشْرَكَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْنَا  
وَإِنْ كُنَّا لَخَطِيئِينَ ○

٩٢- قَالَ لَا تَثْرِبَ عَلَيْكُمْ الْيَوْمَ  
يَغْفِرُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ  
وَهُوَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ ○

٩٣- إِذْ هَبُوا بَقِيصِي هَذَا فَأَلْقُوهُ عَلَى  
وَجْهِ أَبِي بَاتِ بَصِيرًا  
وَأْتُونِي بِأَهْلِكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ۝

C. 113.—Jacob was comforted with the news.

(xii. 94-111.) The whole family moved to Egypt,  
Where Joseph received them with honour.  
He forgave his brothers, thanked and praised  
God, and lived and died a righteous man.  
So the story shows how the Plan of God  
Doth work without fail: it defeats  
The wiles of the wicked, turns evil to good,

1767. The scales fall from the eyes of the brothers. We may suppose that they had joined Judah at this interview, and perhaps what Judah had seen when he was alone helped in the process of their enlightenment. They are convicted of sin out of their own mouths, and now there is no *arrière pensée*, no reserve thought, in their minds. They freely confess their wrong-doing, and the justice of Joseph's preferment.

1768. Joseph is most generous. He is glad that they have at last seen the significance of what happened. But he will not allow them at this great moment of reconciliation to dwell on their conduct with reproaches against themselves. 'There is more urgent work to do. An aged and beloved father is eating out his heart in far Canaan in love and longing for his Joseph, and he must be told all immediately, and "comforted in body, mind, and estate," and so he tells the brothers to hurry back immediately with his shirt as a sign of recognition, as a proof of these wonderful happenings.

1769. It will be remembered that they had covered their crime by taking his shirt, putting on the stains of blood, and pretending that he had been killed by a wolf: see above, xii. 17-18. Now that they have confessed their crime and been forgiven, and they have joyful news to tell Jacob about Joseph, Joseph gives them another shirt of his to prove the truth of their story. It is a rich shirt, befitting a ruler of Egypt, to prove his good fortune, and yet perhaps its design and many colours (xii. 18, n. 1651) were reminiscent of the lost Joseph. The first shirt plunged Jacob into grief. This one will now restore him. See the verses following.

And ever leads those who are true  
To beatitudes undreamt of. So  
Did it happen in Muṣṭafā's life.  
Will man not learn to rely on God  
As the only Reality, turning away  
From all that is fleeting or untrue?

## SECTION 11.

94. ~~W~~hen the Caravan left (Egypt),  
Their father said : "I do indeed  
Scent the presence of Joseph :<sup>1770</sup>  
Nay, think me not a dotard."

٩٤- وَلَمَّا فَصَلَتِ الْعِيرُ قَالَ أَبُوهُمْ إِنِّي  
لَأَجِدُ رِيحَ يُوسُفَ لَوْلَا أَن نُّفَكِّرُ مِنْ

95. They<sup>1771</sup> said : "By God !  
Truly thou art in  
Thine old wandering mind."

٩٥- قَالُوا تَاللّٰهِ إِنَّكَ لَفِي ضَلٰلِكَ الْقَدِيمِ

96. Then when the bearer<sup>1772</sup>  
Of the good news came,  
He cast (the shirt)  
Before his face, and he  
Forthwith<sup>1773</sup> regained clear  
sight.<sup>1774</sup>

٩٦- فَلَمَّا أَن جَاءَ الْبَشِيرُ أَلْقَاهُ عَلَى وَجْهِهِ  
فَارْتَدَّ بِصَدْرٍ  
قَالَ أَنَا غَافِلٌ لِّكُم مَّا  
بِأَنِّي أَخْلَعُ مِنَ اللَّهِ  
مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

He said : "Did I not say  
To you, 'I know of God  
That which ye know not?' "<sup>1775</sup>

1770. Literally, 'I feel the scent, or the air, or the atmosphere or the breath of Joseph'; for *riḥ* has all these significations. Or we might translate, 'I feel the presence of Joseph in the air'. When a long-lost friend is about to be found or heard of, many people have a sort of presentiment of it, which they call telepathy. In Jacob's case it was more definite. He had always had faith that Joseph was living and that his dream would be realised. Now that faith was proved true by his own sons; they had been undutiful, and hard, and ignorant; and circumstances had converged to prove it to them by ocular demonstration. Jacob's soul was more sensitive. No wonder he knew already before the news was actually brought to him.

1771. "They" must be the people around him, before the brothers actually arrived. These same brothers had sedulously cultivated the calumny that their father was an old dotard, and everybody around believed it, even after its authors had to give it up. Thus lies die hard, once they get a start.

1772. We may suppose this to have been Judah (see notes 1752 and 1753 above) who was pledged to his father for Benjamin, and who could now announce the good news not only of Benjamin but of Joseph. We can imagine him hurrying forward, to be the first to tell the news, though the plural pronoun for those whom Jacob addresses in this verse, and for those who reply in the next verse, shows that all the brothers practically arrived together.

1773. The particle *fa* ("then") has here the force of "forthwith".

1774. Jacob's sight had grown dim; his eyes had become white with much sorrow for Joseph (see xii. 84 above). His mind had also become dark and distracted (xii. 85). Both his physical and mental vision now became clear and bright as before.

1775. He had said thus (xii. 86) when everything was against him, and his sons were scoffers. Now they themselves have come to say that his faith was justified and his vision was true.

97. They said : " Oh our father !  
Ask for us forgiveness  
For our sins, for we  
Were truly at fault."

٩٧- قَالُوا يَا أَبَانَا اسْتَغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا  
إِنَّا كُنَّا خَاطِئِينَ ۝

98. He said : " Soon <sup>1776</sup> will I  
Ask my Lord for forgiveness  
For you : for He is indeed  
Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."

٩٨- قَالَ سَوْفَ أَسْتَغْفِرُ لَكُمْ رَبِّي  
إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ ۝

99. ~~Then~~ when they entered <sup>1777</sup>  
The presence of Joseph,  
He provided a home  
For his parents with himself,  
And said : " Enter ye <sup>1778</sup>  
Egypt (all) in safety  
If it please God."

٩٩- فَلَمَّا دَخَلُوا عَلَى يُوسُفَ  
أَوْحَى إِلَيْهِ أَبُوئِهِ  
وَقَالَ ادْخُلُوا مَعِيَ إِلَى  
أَرْضِي ۝

100. And he raised his parents  
High on the throne (of dignity), <sup>1779</sup>  
And they fell down in prostration,  
(All) before him. He said :  
" Oh my father ! this is  
The fulfilment of my vision  
Of old ! God hath made it  
Come true ! He was indeed  
Good to me when He  
Took me out of prison

١٠٠- وَرَفَعَهُ أَبُوئِهِ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ  
وَحُورُوا لَهُ سَجْدًا ۝ وَقَالَ  
يَا أَبَتِي هَذَا تَأْوِيلُ رُؤْيَايَ  
مِن قَبْلُ ۖ قَدْ جَعَلَهَا رَبِّي حَقًّا ۖ وَقَدْ  
أَحْسَنَ بِي إِذْ أَخْرَجَنِي مِنَ السِّجْنِ

1776. He fully intended to do this, but the most injured party was Joseph, and it was only fair that Joseph should be consulted. In fact Joseph had already forgiven his brothers all their past, and his father could confidently look forward to Joseph joining in the wish of the whole family to turn to God through their aged father Jacob in his prophetic office.

1777. At length the whole family arrived in Egypt and were re-united with Joseph. They were all entertained and provided with homes. But the parents were treated with special honour, as was becoming both to Joseph's character and ordinary family ethics. His mother Rachel had long been dead, but he had been brought up by his mother's sister Leah, whom his father had also married. Leah was now his mother. They were lodged with Joseph himself.

1778. This is in Arabic in the plural, not in the dual number. The welcome is for all to Egypt, and under the auspices of the Wazir of Egypt. They came, therefore, under God's will, to a double sense of security : Egypt was secure from the famine unlike the neighbouring countries ; and they were to be cared for by the highest in the land.

1779. Certainly metaphorically : probably also literally. By Eastern custom the place of honour at a ceremonial reception is on a seat on a dais, with a special cushion of honour, such as is assigned to a bridegroom at his reception. To show his high respect for his parents, Joseph made them sit on a throne of dignity. On the other hand, his parents and his brothers,—all performed the ceremony of prostration before Joseph in recognition of his supreme rank in Egypt under the Pharaoh. And thus was fulfilled the dream or vision of his youth (xii. 4 above, and n. 1633).



102. Such is one of the stories  
Of what happened unseen,<sup>1784</sup>  
Which We reveal by inspiration.  
Unto thee: nor wast thou<sup>1785</sup>  
(Present) with them when they  
Concerted their plans together  
In the process of weaving their  
plots.

١٠٢. ذَلِكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ  
نُوحِيهِ إِلَيْكَ  
وَمَا كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ  
إِذْ اجْتَمَعُوا أَمْرَهُمْ وَهُمْ يَمْكُرُونَ ○

103. Yet no faith will  
The greater part of mankind  
Have, however ardently  
Thou dost desire it.<sup>1786</sup>

١٠٣. وَمَا أَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ  
وَلَوْ حَرَصْتَ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ ○

104. And no reward dost thou ask  
Of them for this: it is  
No less than a Message  
For all creatures.<sup>1787</sup>

١٠٤. وَمَا تَسْأَلُهُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ  
إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِلْعَالَمِينَ ○

#### SECTION 12.

105. And how many Signs  
In the heavens and the earth

١٠٥. وَكَأَيِّنْ مِنْ آيَاتٍ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

1784. The story is finished. But is it a story? It is rather a recital of forces and motives, thoughts and feelings, complications and results, ordinarily not seen by men. However much they concert their plans and unite their forces, whatever dark plots they back with all their resources,—the plan of God works irresistibly, and sweeps away all their machinations. The good win through in the end, but not always as they planned; the evil are foiled, and often their very plots help the good. What did the brothers desire in trying to get rid of Joseph, and what actually happened? How did Zulaikha form an image of her love, what false traps and sins did it not lead her into, and how, through it all, by her constancy and faith, did she see her way to a higher, nobler, and purer love? How wrong was it of the cup-bearer to forget Joseph, and yet how his very forgetfulness kept Joseph safe and undisturbed in prison until the day came when he should tackle the great problems of Pharaoh's kingdom? With every character in the story there are problems, and the whole is a beautifully balanced picture of the working of God's providence in man's chequered destiny.

1785. The holy Apostle was no actor in those scenes; yet by inspiration he was able to expound them in the divine light, as they had never been expounded before, whether in the Pentateuch or by any Seer before him. And allegorically they figured his own story,—how his own brethren sought to betray and kill him, how by God's providence he was not only saved but he won through, and how his own friends misconceived their love for him and had to be taught that true love which transcends sex and self. Of such a dream of love Plato had an inkling.

1786. In spite of such an exposition and such a convincing illustration, how few men really have true faith,—such a faith as Jacob had in the old story, or Muhammad the Chosen-One had, in the story which was actually unfolding itself on the world's stage when this Sūra was revealed, shortly before the Hijrat. Muṣṭafā's ardent wish and faith was to save his people and all mankind from the graceless condition of want of faith. But his efforts were flouted, and he had to leave his home and suffer all kinds of persecution; but, like Joseph, and more than Joseph, he was marked out for great work, which he finally achieved.

1787. The divine Message was priceless; it was not for the Messenger's personal profit, nor did he ask of men any reward for bringing it for their benefit. It was for all creatures,—literally, for all the worlds, as explained in i., ii. n. 20.

Do they pass by? Yet they  
Turn (their faces) away from  
them! <sup>1788</sup>

يَتَوْنُ عَلَيْهَا وَهُمْ عَنْهَا مُعْرِضُونَ ○

106. And most of them  
Believe not in God  
Without associating (others  
As partners) with Him! <sup>1789</sup>

۱۰۶- وَمَا يُؤْمِنُ أَكْثَرُهُمْ بِاللَّهِ  
إِلَّا وَهُمْ شُرَكَاءُ كُفُون ○

107. Do they then feel secure  
From the coming against them  
Of the covering veil <sup>1790</sup>  
Of the wrath of God,—  
Or of the coming against them  
Of the (final) Hour  
All of a sudden <sup>1791</sup>  
While they perceive not?

۱۰۷- أَفَأَمِنُوا أَنْ تَأْتِيَهُمْ  
غَاشِيَةٌ مِنْ عَذَابِ اللَّهِ  
أَوْ تَأْتِيَهُمُ السَّاعَةُ بَغْثَةً  
وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ○

108. Say thou: "This is my Way:  
I do invite unto God,—  
On evidence clear as  
The seeing with one's eyes,—" <sup>1792</sup>

۱۰۸- قُلْ هَذِهِ سَبِيلِي أَدْعُو إِلَى اللَّهِ  
عَلَى بَصِيرَةٍ

فَقُلْ سَبِيلِي

1788. Not only can we learn through Scripture of the working of God's providence in human history and the history of individual souls. His Signs are scattered literally throughout nature—throughout Creation—for all who have eyes to see. And yet man is so arrogant that he turns away his very eyes from them!

1789. Even if people profess a nominal faith in God, they corrupt it by believing in other things as if they were God's partners, or had some share in the shaping of the world's destinies! In some circles, it is idolatry, the worship of stocks and stones. In others, it is Christolatry and Mariolatry, or the deification of heroes and men of renown. In others it is the powers of Nature or of Life, or of the human intellect personified in Science or Art or invention, and this is the more common form of modern idolatry. Others again worship mystery, or imaginary powers of good or even evil: greed and fear are mixed up with these forms of worship. Islam calls us to worship the One True God, and Him only.

1790. *Gāshiyat*—covering veil, pall; used for the Judgment to come, which will be so dark and appalling as to hide up all other petty things, and be the one great reality for the souls that were slaves to evil.

1791. The metaphor is changed, from intensity of darkness to suddenness of time. It will come before they are aware of it. Let them not feel any sense of safety in sin.

1792. Islam holds fast to the one central fact in the spiritual world,—the unity of God, and all Reality springing from Him and Him alone. There can be no one and nothing in competition with that one and only Reality. It is the essence of Truth. All other ideas or existences, including our perception of Self, are merely relative,—mere projections from the wonderful faculties which He has given to us. This is not, to us, mere hypothesis. It is in our inmost experience. In the physical world, they say that seeing is believing. In our inner-world this sense of God is as clear as sight in the physical world. Therefore, *Muṣṭafā* and those who really follow him in the truest sense of the word, call all the world to see this Truth, feel this experience, follow this Way. They will never be distracted by metaphysical speculations, whose validity will always be doubtful, nor be deluded with phantoms which lead men astray.

I and whoever follows me.  
Glory to God! and never  
Will I join gods with God!"

109. Nor did We send before thee  
(As apostles) any but men,<sup>1793</sup>  
Whom We did inspire,—  
(Men) living in human habitations.  
Do they not travel  
Through the earth, and see  
What was the end  
Of those before them?  
But the home of the Hereafter<sup>1794</sup>  
Is best, for those who do right.  
Will ye not then understand?

110. (Respite will be granted)  
Until, when the apostles  
Give up hope (of their people)  
And (come to) think that they  
Were treated as liars,<sup>1795</sup>  
There reaches them Our help,  
And those whom We will  
Are delivered into safety.  
But never will be warded off  
Our punishment from those  
Who are in sin.

111. There is, in their stories,<sup>1796</sup>  
Instruction for men ended

أَنَا وَمَنْ أَتَّبَعَنِي وَسُبْحَنَ اللَّهِ وَمَا أَنَا  
مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ○

١٠٩- وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ إِلَّا رِجَالًا  
نُوحِيَ إِلَيْهِمْ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْقُرَى  
أَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوا كَيْفَ  
كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ  
وَلَدَارُ الْآخِرَةِ خَيْرٌ لِلَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا  
أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ○

١١٠- حَتَّىٰ إِذَا اسْتَيْسَسَ الرُّسُلُ  
وَوَدَّوْا أَنَّهُمْ قَدْ كُذِّبُوا  
بِجَاءِ هُمْ تَصْرَعًا فَنُوحِيَ مَنْ شَاءُوا  
وَلَا يُرِيدُ بَأْسَنَا  
عَنِ الْقَوْمِ الْمُجْرِمِينَ ○

١١١- لَقَدْ كَانَ فِي قَصَصِهِمْ عِبْرَةٌ لِأُولَى

1793. It was men that God sent as His Messengers to explain Him to men. He did not send angels or gods. Into His chosen men He breathed His inspiration, so that they could see truer than other men. But they were men living with men,—in men's habitations in town or country; not recluses or cenobites, who had no personal experience of men's affairs and could not be teachers of men in the fullest sense. Their deeds tell their own tale.

1794. The righteous, the men of God, had, as in Joseph's history, some evidence of God's providence in this very world, with all its imperfections as reflecting our imperfections. But this world is of no real consequence to them. Their home is in the Hereafter. Joseph's earthly home was in Canaan; but he attained his glory elsewhere; and his spiritual Home is in the great Society of the Righteous (iii. 39).

1795. *Zannū* (come to think): I construe the nominative of this verb to be "the apostles" in agreement with the best authorities. *Kuṣībū* is the usual reading, though *Kuṣṣībū*, the alternative reading, also rests on good authority. I construe the meaning to be: that God gives plenty of rope to the wicked (as in Joseph's story) until His own Messengers feel almost that it will be hopeless to preach to them and come to consider themselves branded as liars by an unbelieving world; that the breaking-point is then reached; that God's help then comes swiftly to His men, and they are delivered from persecution and danger, while the wrath of God overtakes sinners, and nothing can then ward it off. This interpretation has good authority behind it, though there are differences of opinion.

1796. *Their stories*: i.e., the stories of the apostles or of the wicked; for the two threads intertwine, as in Joseph's story.

With understanding. It is not  
A tale invented, but a

confirmation  
Of what went before it,—<sup>1797</sup>

A detailed exposition  
Of all things, and a Guide  
And a Mercy to any such  
As believe.

الْكِتَابُ مَا كَانَ حَدِيثًا يُفْتَرَى  
وَلَكِنْ تَصْدِيقَ الَّذِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ  
وَتَفْصِيلَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ  
وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ۝



1797. A story like that of Joseph is not a purely imaginary fable. The People of the Book have it in their sacred literature. It is confirmed here in its main outline, but here there is a detailed spiritual exposition that will be found nowhere in earlier literature. The exposition covers all sides of human life. If properly understood it gives valuable lessons to guide our conduct,—an instance of God's grace and mercy to people who will go to Him in faith and put their affairs in His hands.



## APPENDIX VI

## Allegorical Interpretation of the Story of Joseph.

(Sūtra xii.)

Spiritual things can only be understood by symbols taken from things which are familiar to us in this life. In a sense this fleeting life itself is a symbol. History is a symbol. The whole phenomenal world is a symbol. The reality lies behind it, like the real light behind the Cave, in Plato's Theory of Ideas. This is not to say that Islam agrees with the Vedantists in calling this whole visible world an illusion. It is an illusion to suppose that it is the only world. But it is equally an illusion to suppose that this world is of no consequence. It is of as much consequence as our thoughts, feelings, dreams, and Life. We have to make use of them, study and respect their laws, and obey the duties imposed on us by the spiritual part of us being entangled in their chain. But they are not eternal, and they will pass away. Our duty is to prepare ourselves for the truer life, the eternal life: we emancipate ourselves from them, not by fleeing them (for that is impossible), but by fulfilling our obligations in them, as an apprentice or probationer attains his real position by completing his apprenticeship or probation satisfactorily and so ceasing to be an apprentice or probationer.

From this point of view there is an allegorical meaning in all experience, history, and spiritual teaching. The temporary relationships, the fleeting events, our triumphs, defeats, and difficulties in this phenomenal world, are the bridges through which we pass to the higher world. Our temporal experiences are the foundation on which our greater and real Life is built up. This greater and real Life is not merely a thing of the future. It is within us all the time, if we only seek its truer light and try to fulfil our lower and temporal functions by the more stable principles with which it furnishes us.

The glimpses of the spiritual Joseph, as I understand them, in the Qur-ān, are afforded us "in order that we may learn wisdom" (xii. 2). Stories, events, visions, dreams, seem all to be assimilated under the Arabic word *Aḥādith*. The real ones among them (as opposed to futile fancies) have all an inner meaning. It is only given to a few choicer spirits to understand and expound them. Joseph was one of these choicer spirits. From his boyhood he had an inner vision which he treasured up in his mind. Its meaning—or full meaning—only dawned on him afterwards. When it did, he was able to fulfil his mission in life.

This mission had many aspects. His father Jacob was also a Seer or Prophet, but Joseph in his maturity surpassed him in rank, and Joseph's life and filial love were as it were necessary to his father to complete and crown the full achievement of his life. Then Joseph, among his ten half-brothers and one full brother, had a protective and guiding mission. To Benjamin, his one full brother, and the youngest in the family, he was almost like a father when Jacob reached old age and resigned the headship of the family. The other brothers reflect all the pettiness, wickedness, jealousy, spite, hatred, injustice, and lower propensities of human life, combined with the latent reasonableness and the capacity to repent and turn over a new leaf, which it was Joseph's mission to awaken at the expense of much suffering to himself. The

ten brothers are shown to us collectively as acting as a human social group, with all their arrogance based on numbers and physical strength, and contempt of older and wiser experience. But we are also shown how the better side of human nature sometimes struggles to assert itself as against the baser and grosser standards of mass mentality, as when one of them advised them not to take Joseph's life (xii. 10), and again, later, when one of them felt ashamed to show himself before his father without Benjamin and offered to stay behind if perchance he could release Benjamin (xii. 78, 80). But it will be noticed that in both cases there was a good deal of alloy with the gold. The better nature of the individual has always a hard fight against the lower collective standards, which to unregenerate human nature seem to be the last word in morality, like the herd instinct in the lower animals. This is also shown in the actions and reactions between Zulaikhā and the Society women. Sometimes Zulaikhā was almost on the point of seeing the error of her ways, when her passion is inflamed and her higher nature suppressed by the bitter taste of what the world says and the discovery that those who cast the first stone at a delinquent would be the first to take all the so-called enjoyment of the sin which they are so prompt to reprobate in others.

To the merchants who found and purchased Joseph, the handsome young slave of winning ways was indeed "a treasure" (xii. 19). They understood that treasure in a material and grasping commercial spirit, but no doubt the road journey from Canaan to the Egyptian capital showed them the divinely-inspired virtuous side of Joseph, and it is impossible to suppose that they had not much spiritual profit out of it. The 'Aziz of Egypt, the high official who bought him, expected much good out of him, wanted to treat him with honour, and adopt him as a son (xii. 21). He no doubt saw (if but vaguely) the moral and spiritual grandeur of Joseph, but his highest privilege (though he may not have known it) was that he was able to be the instrument by which Joseph was "established in the land" (xii. 21); and that through him the strange, romantic, wholly feminine character of Zulaikhā was brought into touch with her ideal, and through sorrow, suffering, sin, and repentance, was at last able to catch a glimpse of that heavenly love of which she had dreamed and which she had so much misunderstood under the stress of human passion. On Zulaikhā our romantic *Ṣūfī* poetry has concentrated its attention in the story of Joseph, and of this we shall speak presently: In the 'Aziz's house Joseph attained his full manhood and endowment of Power and Knowledge from God (xii. 22). In her ardent way as a sinner Zulaikhā had a share in Joseph's development, for his virtue was tried through her beauty and passion and emerged triumphant.

The Society ladies who taunted Zulaikhā represent the prudish element in femininity. The contest between the jealous, prude and the frank, impulsive victim of ardent love is well-figured in the relations between the ladies and Zulaikhā right to the end. Calculating hypocrisy and intolerant slander are farther from true love than a misconceived desire in earthly love, and this point is well brought out in Joseph's story. The ladies, when they cut their fingers at Zulaikhā's feast, are the type of women who figuratively cut their souls in straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel.

Joseph's slavery and prison are the types of what a righteous man has to suffer through the sins and follies of others, in order (1) that he may bring some good to others, and (2) that he may develop his own character and high destiny. Without sorrow, suffering and striving—spiritual *jihād*—even the best men cannot attain their full stature. Through them we are taught a true sense of values. The

slave must work, must labour, not for himself, but for others. If he does it in the right spirit, he exposes the hollowness of idleness, the ridiculous position of arrogance, and the futility of power which permits injustice. The prisoner who being innocent is put into a human prison enlarges his own spiritual liberty and opportunity, and perhaps shows up by contrast the darker and more impenetrable prison in whose grip his unjust incarcerators are held. The test is whether the innocent man who is put into prison or subjection is able to hold up his head. If so, he is able to achieve Burns's ideal, "Preserve the dignity of man, with soul erect": for the *Tawakkul* of Islam will have made it a part of his nature to know for certain that "the Universal Plan will all protect."

The spiritual benefit which the two fellow-prisoners derived from Joseph's spiritual influence is explained in the notes to xii. 36-40. And then comes the period of Joseph's exaltation in worldly position, his strenuous administration of Egypt during fourteen eventful years, and perhaps to the end of his life, his opportunities to make the Pharaoh's power real and beneficent, instead of a mere simulacrum and a nerveless show, behind which lurked injustice and oppression. There is also the touching reunion of the family. The little artifice by which Joseph induces the brothers to confess their own hatred and spite (xii. 77) leads to their own self-exposure, preparatory to their repentance and forgiveness. On this and innumerable other points whole volumes could be written. But I will now pass on to Zulaikhā and her treatment in our mystic-romantic poetry, for it forms an interesting commentary on what Islam has understood from one episode in Joseph's career.

In almost all Islamic languages the romance of Yūsuf and Zulaikhā has justly attracted much attention in mystic poetry. Perhaps the order of the names should really be reversed and the romance should be called that of Zulaikhā and Yūsuf. In Persian the great Firdausī tried his hand at it. But the great masterpiece is that of Jāmī whose dates fall between A.H. 817 and 898, equivalent to A.D. 1414-1492. I consider it one of the masterpieces of the world's literature. There is a good German translation by Rosenzweig and an English translation by R. T. H. Griffith. The translation by A. Rogers is not so good. The Urdu translations which I have seen are not worth mention. The original Persian is so grand and instructive that it is a pity that our Islamic students do not study it with the attention which it deserves. I shall give a very brief account of the version as developed by Jāmī: where I quote in English verse, I shall use Griffith's version (of 1881).

According to Jāmī, Zulaikhā is a beautiful Princess, a daughter of a king of the West (*Magrib*). In her youth she dreamt a dream, in which she saw a handsome man, as noble and true as he was handsome, and she fell in love with him. So deep and constant was her love that she pined away for the love of the ideal man of her dream. She nursed her love and sorrow in secret, making only her nurse her confidante, in the hope that the nurse might by her secret arts procure a meeting with the dear love of her dreams. She had a second and a third dream, and in the third, she had the courage to ask the man in the vision his name and country. He did not tell her his name, but he said he was the Wazir of Egypt.

Armed with this clue, Zulaikhā refused all offers of marriage from kings and princes, cherishing in her heart only the image of the man she had seen in her dream, who she had learnt was the Wazir of Egypt. At length her father is induced to send a wise man to Egypt, to arrange the marriage with the Wazir, though he could not understand why the Princess should have refused the offers of kings and princes from

all over the world. The wise man interviews the Wazir of Egypt, who is torn internally with many feelings. Here was a Princess who had refused the offers of great kings. His ambition was all aflame. How could he refuse? Yet he knew his own condition. He was a eunuch. How could he accept? He pleaded that the king of Egypt needed him so much that he could not be absent a single hour. But he would send 200 golden litters and 1000 slave-girls to wait on Zulaikhā and convey her with honour to Egypt. The agent of Zulaikhā's father knew that Zulaikhā's heart was so set upon the Wazir of Egypt that it would be death to her if she could not get him. So he arranged the match and returned with what he supposed was good news. And Zulaikhā, too, was delighted. Her bliss knew no bounds. She now, she thought, had the prospect of union with the man of her dreams. Thus, moralises the Poet, our joys and sorrows come from dreams and fancies!

Great preparations were made for Zulaikhā's bridal procession to Egypt. Zulaikhā's litter was carved with aloe and sandalwood; its roof was resplendent with gems and gold like Jamshid's tent: its curtains were hung with gold brocade. And in it was Zulaikhā, radiant and happy that she was now going to meet the lord of her love, whom she knew from her dreams, and to whom she would now be united for ever. When they approached the Egyptian capital, the Wazir came out to meet his bride with a splendid equipage. Zulaikhā was all eagerness to feast her eyes with a sight of her beloved. She peeped through a hole in her curtain, when lo! she was full of dismay. This Wazir was not the man of her dreams!—not the man to whom she had plighted her troth, and to whom she would be faithful for life. She had in her dreams seen the image of Yūsuf, not of this 'Aziz. Never would she give her faith or her love or her virgin honour to another. She began to bemoan her fate "*Nish'indam nakhl i khurmā, khār bar-dād* (I planted a date-palm: what has come out but thorns?)" She was in utter despair. What was to be done? A voice came to her from the unseen world. It said: "True, this is not thy love! But thy desire for thy true love will be satisfied through him. Fear him not. The jewel of thy virgin honour is safe with him. If a great sleeve is shown, but there is no hand within, what is there to hold a dagger?" Zulaikhā had, of her own deliberate choice, had this marriage arranged. She must wed the eunuch. Whatever her grief, she must not complain. She went through the brilliant ceremony. But her heart was empty. It was given to the man of her dreams! And it would never be another's! And so she spent her days in outward splendour and inward grief, pining away in love unsatisfied.

At this time, perhaps, she had a glimpse of that true love in which self is blotted out. In her despair, in her anguish, she could see things which were later obscured to her in her pride and in the allurements of her sense. She poured out her soul in music. She had faith. "Surely," she thought, "thou gavest me no lying vision! Why didst thou call thyself Wazir of Egypt? And I left my home and country to be with thee, to be thine! I know I shall win thee in the end! When that happy day comes, I shall be not I, but thou! May I see thee soon!"

"I shall roll up the carpet of life when I see  
Thy dear face again, and shall cease to be;  
For self will be lost in that rapture, and all  
The threads of my thought from my hand will fall;  
Not Me wilt thou find, for this Self will have fled;  
Thou wilt be my soul in mine own soul's stead.

All thought of Self will be swept from my mind,  
 And Thee, only, Thee, in my place shall it find ;  
 More precious than heaven, than earth more dear,  
 Myself were forgotten if Thou wert near."

She waited in faith and longing. At length came news of a great sensation in the market. A foreign merchant was bringing, they said, a slave the like of whom had never been seen, whether for looks, or wit, or integrity, or purity of word and mind. It was no slave, but a sun of splendour, a moon of goodness, a king in the realm of love ! The caravan had yet barely entered the city. But the king heard of it, and ordered the Wazîr (Zulaikhâ's nominal husband) to go and see and bring this new prodigy into the king's presence. When the Wazîr came to the caravan and saw Yûsuf, he found his beauty was even greater than rumour had described. He bowed down, with feelings akin to worship. But Yûsuf gently raised him and taught him the Gospel of Unity,—that worship was due to God alone. When the merchant was told of the king's order he pleaded delay on the ground that they were travel-stained and unfit to appear before the king until they had washed in the Nile and made themselves presentable.

Meanwhile the fame of Yûsuf's beauty, goodness, purity, and truth spread like wild-fire. Each one—man or woman—who possessed—or thought he or she possessed—any of these qualities even in a minute degree, grew jealous that another—a stranger and a slave—should draw away all hearts. To the merchant, the value of his "treasure" went up the more it was talked about. The king might perhaps pay the whole revenue of Egypt to purchase him. But there was one to whom Yûsuf's beauty was worth more than all the revenue of Egypt and who could outbid the king himself. This was Zulaikhâ, the lovely Princess of the West, whose jewels were worth the revenues of twenty kingdoms, but who took no pleasure in them in pining for the love of her dreams. She, too, heard of this wonderful prodigy, and came to have a peep at it through the curtains of her litter. Behold ! when she saw Yûsuf, it was the very face she had seen in her dreams,—for which she had left home and people and country, and for which she had been praying and pining these many years ! She had no doubt about it whatever. She had found her love ! But to see is not to attain. The whole rabble saw Yûsuf, and he was to be presented to the king. She told her husband to present a humble petition to the king. The king knew that he, the Wazîr, had no son and could have none. The king knew the services which he as Wazîr had rendered to the king, his dynasty, and his country. Would the king permit him to bid for this wondrous slave with the Wazîr's own money ? If so, the king would get the slave just the same, but would afford his Wazîr the happiness of having a wonderful son in his house to carry on his name ? The king saw Yûsuf and accorded the Wazîr the very reasonable request which he had made. Perhaps, though the poet does not say so, the king wondered whether the Wazîr would be able to put up the whole of the money, and may have intended benevolently to supplement the good Wazîr's resources, should the need arise.

Then came a strange scene typical of Vanity Fair. Yûsuf was put up to auction. Every petty individual thought he or she could purchase Yûsuf ! One old woman had nothing but a little yarn she had spun. "Enough," she thought, "to give me the honour of standing in the market and boasting for ever that I had bid for Yûsuf." Some came from motives of curiosity : some from motives of jealousy.

Why should the world go mad after a beauty or a virtue of a kind different from what they themselves possessed, however homely? Some came with pride of purse. "A thousand gold pieces!" they shouted as if to stifle all competition. The bid went on to a hundred times as much. Nor did it stop there. "Of fragrant musk I will give to the full weight of Yūsuf!" said one who had travelled to the uttermost ends of the earth in search of costly perfumes. "No good!" said another: "I offer the same weight of the most costly rubies and diamonds!" Poor deluded mortals! "The heaven's glorious sun" was "not to be deep-searched with saucy looks!" The Wazīr's resources—and indeed the kingdom's revenues,—had been exceeded many times already in the bidding. But Zulaikhā, the Princess of the West, had untold wealth in her casket of gems. Yūsuf was more than life itself to her. She bade the Wazīr double the highest bid. This was conclusive. Yūsuf went to the Wazīr. And poor Zulaikhā! She knew that Yūsuf was worth more than the price she had paid for him! Yet, in her feminine weakness, she thought Yūsuf had a price! She thought that her beauty, her birth, her constancy, her unflinching gift of her person to him, would weigh in the scale. Alas! even these things were not enough for Yūsuf. The sale in the phenomenal world was all illusory in the real world. As Zulaikhā had not yet learnt this, she had yet to pass through many trials, temptations, sins, and sorrows, before her grosser self could be purged out and she could be fit to receive Yūsuf. Meanwhile, he who could talk to the lowest in prison on equal terms, was unattainable to Zulaikhā. The dust of his feet had made the merchant who had looked after him fabulously wealthy, but Yūsuf was still to be the prey to many prying glances, the mark of many poisoned arrows, the quarry of many cunning traps. But his soul was spotless, and his manhood remained unswayed.

At this point, about the middle of the story, we are introduced by the poet to a mysterious figure, the lovely Bāzīga, who is in some respects a foil to Zulaikhā. Bāzīga's speech is the key to the whole allegory. She is a princess of the 'Ad race, a people of Arabian antiquity referred to in many places in the Qur-ān, and described in n. 1040 to vii. 65. She had heard of Yūsuf, and had also come with great wealth to bid for him. She had had an interview and talk with Yūsuf, and he had turned her attention from himself to the Great Creator, and given her the precious Message of Unity and Truth. 'This world of visible beauty,' he had said, 'is but the screen of the invisible and ineffable beauty within. Any beauty or goodness that you see here is but a reflection or image of the perfect, real, and eternal Beauty, Goodness, and Truth, which you should seek.' Convinced by his teaching, she resigns all folly, and bursts into a splendid rhapsody, concluding with these words:—

" Mine eyes have been touched by the Truth's pure ray,  
And the dream of folly has passed away.  
Mine eyes thou hast opened—God bless thee for it!—  
And mine heart to the Soul of the soul thou hast knit!  
From a fond strange love thou hast turned my feet,  
The Lord of all creatures to know and meet;  
If I bore a tongue in each single hair,  
Each and all should thy praises declare!"

She resigned her wealth and her pomp, attended to the needy, and spent her days in prayer and praise on the banks of the Nile.

Zulaikhā is not of that temperament, and she reaches Truth and Peace by a different and much more thorny path. She is still in the grip of the beauty of sense. She burns with the flame of animal love, and tempts Yūsuf. He is above any passion inconsistent with truth and fidelity, but his heart is sore distressed to think that he should bring sorrow on those who loved him. His father loved him, and that caused his brothers the pain of jealousy and his father himself the pain of separation. He would gladly serve her and the Wazīr in all that was reasonable. But why seek to go beyond, on the road to evil? Zulaikhā placed all sorts of temptations in his way, but he stood firm as a rock. At length she trapped him into a garden house and made overtures to him. But he fled. She pursued, and in the struggle, tore his shirt at the back. He made good his escape. Outside the house he met the Wazīr, but he was too kindly and forbearing, too solicitous of Zulaikhā's honour to betray her or say anything of what had happened. Nor did the Wazīr press him, but taking his hand in his own, entered the house with him. Zulaikhā, seeing them thus enter, linked in mutual confidence, had a cruel and baseless suspicion—that she had been humiliated and betrayed by Yūsuf. Her guilty conscience and injured pride spurred her on to impulsive lies and false accusations. Then was Yūsuf compelled, in a few simple words, to tell so much of the truth as would save the Wazīr from committing an act of injustice—an act inconsistent with his high office. The condition of the shirt decided the matter: the Wazīr asked Zulaikhā to seek God's pardon and charged Yūsuf to say nothing more of this affair, lest the Wazīr's own position should be compromised.

Yūsuf had no need of the Wazīr's words to make him discreet. But, says the poet, it suits not love to seek a corner of safety. Zulaikhā, roused by anger and revenge, threw prudence to the winds. Her conduct accused, rather than excused, her. Tongues wagged. Society exaggerated, or distorted, the voice of rumour, itself fed on exaggeration and distortion. Society pointed the finger of scorn at her. Good, bad, or hypocritical, the ladies all reviled her. 'Shameless woman, to throw herself on her slave! And he to scorn her! What was Egypt coming to! If she had had their spirit or their charm, who could have resisted it?' Stung by their insolence, Zulaikhā determined to have her revenge on the ladies. She invited them to a sumptuous banquet. At dessert, just as they were about to cut their oranges with their knives, Yūsuf was admitted to the assembly. The very sight of him dazzled the ladies. 'He is no man, but a noble angel!' they cried. In their extreme emotion they cut their fingers. Zulaikhā was more than justified in their eyes. But they had their own lower motives. Each lady thought in her heart that she could win his love where Zulaikhā had failed. Jealousy further inflamed Zulaikhā's passion. They advised her to soften the steel in the fire, to soften Yūsuf's heart in prison. Yūsuf was now beset with the persecution, not of one woman but of many women, and he himself prayed for safety in prison. Many motives on the part of various people thus combined to send him to prison. They are analysed in my note 1684 to xii. 35. So to prison Yūsuf went, with all marks of disgrace and ignominy.

To the men in prison Yūsuf's advent was a blessing, for he taught them the Truth and showed them the Light. Such men as Yūsuf, says the poet, turn a hell into Paradise. To Zulaikhā's heart came new sorrow, new penitence, new tortures of conscience. Her heart was in prison with the prisoner. Her health gave way. In torturing and killing her false Self, she began almost to regain her true Self.

Meanwhile Yūsuf's goodness of heart made him a king among his fellow-prisoners. If any were ill, he tended them; if there was anything on their mind, he sympathised with them and consoled them. They had unbounded faith in him, and they gladly took his teaching and profited by it. Two of them took their dreams to him and he interpreted them correctly. One of them was restored to the king's favour. When the king in his turn dreamed a dream, this man remembered Yūsuf and obtained the interpretation of the king's dream through him. Yūsuf was released from prison, raised to high honour, and given full authority in the land. The old Wazīr, Zulaikhā's husband, was dead, and Yūsuf was charged with the arrangements for meeting the great famine that was prognosticated. This part of the story is touched upon but lightly by the poet, as his theme is the love of Zulaikhā.

She, a widow, bereft of youth, beauty, honour, resources, health, even eyesight, yet cherishes the memory of Yūsuf and waters it with her tears. He is now far above her in worldly station, as he always was above her in spiritual worth. Her humbled pride opens her spiritual eyes. She cries to him in her agony, and he listens. He knows the true from the false, and he is just. The woman whom he repelled when she was in the bloom of health, youth, and beauty, when she was rich, proud, and high in rank—now that she is meek, lowly, and sincere, finds favour in his sight. At his prayer her health, youth, and beauty are restored, and they are married in pure and true love. Even so, their love was not perfected until they united their hearts in pure worship to God.

The core of the allegory is in its definition of love,—the true and the eternal as distinguished from the false and the ephemeral. Life is subject to many changes, and so is what is ordinarily called Love among men.

"One is cast down to the earth, and one

Is lifted on high like the glorious sun.

Blessed is he who has wit to learn

How the favour of fortune may change and turn,

Whose head is not raised in his high estate,

Nor his heart in misfortune made desolate."

False love is only a toy for self-indulgence. Self, not the Other, is the governing motive.

"When love is not perfect, with one sole thought—

Himself—is the heart of the lover fraught.

He looks on his love as a charming toy,

The spring and source of his selfish joy.

One rose he would pluck from his love, and leave

A hundred thorns her lone heart to grieve."

Just as, in human affairs, there is true and false love, so in our inner and higher life, there is a divine love that transcends all human love. This is the contrast between the *'ishq ḥaqīqī* and the *'ishq majāsī*.

"How blest is he who can close his eye

And let the vain pageants of life pass by!—

Untouched by the magic of earth can keep

His soul awake while the senses sleep;

Scorn the false and the fleeting that meets the view,

And see what is hidden and firm and true!"



To the meek and lowly, who seek God's love in sincerity and are willing to sacrifice all that the external world holds dear, God grants His love in abundant measure. For every sin, followed by repentance and right will, there is forgiveness; but for persistent pride and hardness of heart there is nothing but the abyss.

This allegory has sometimes been compared to that of Cupid and Psyche in western literature. It goes back to Greek and Roman times. Cupid (or Eros) is Love (masculine): Psyche (feminine) is the human soul. The Platonic and Neoplatonic philosophy built up a doctrine of the human soul, caught in the snare of matter and sensuality, which must be raised up to its pristine purity by Love. The most picturesque form in which the allegory was worked up was by Apuleius (born about 125 A.D.). It forms an episode in his Latin work *The Metamorphoses* or *The Golden Ass*. Here Psyche is the human soul whom Cupid (Love) carries off to a secluded spot. She is charged to check her curiosity and enjoy her bliss. Venus (earthly love) is jealous and makes Psyche break Love's condition, whereupon Love leaves her, and she falls into servitude to Venus (carnal love). After many adventures she is restored again by Cupid (true love) and they are re-united. The allegory has attracted many modern writers, including Robert Bridges (who has translated it) and Walter Pater who has adapted it in his *Marius the Epicurean*. William Morris has also introduced it in his *Earthly Paradise*. Among French writers whom it has attracted may be mentioned La Fontaine the fabulist, and Molière the dramatist. But the theme of that allegory is not as wide as the theme of the allegory of Yūsuf and Zulaikḥā.

INTRODUCTION TO SŪRA XIII (*Ra'id*).

The chronological place of this Sūra and the general argument of Sūras x. to xv. has been described in the Introduction to S. x.

The special argument of this Sūra deals with that aspect of God's revelation of Himself to man and His dealings with him, which is concerned with certain contrasts which are here pointed out. There is the revelation to the Prophets, which comes in spoken words adapted to the language of the various men and groups of men to whom it comes; and there is the parallel revelation or Signs in the constant laws of external nature, on this earth and in the visible heavens. There is the contrast between recurring life and death already in the external world: why should men disbelieve in the life after death? They mock at the idea of punishment because it is deferred: but can they not see God's power and glory in thunder and the forces of nature? All Creation praises Him: it is the good that endures and the evil that is swept away like froth or scum. Not only in miracles but in the normal working of the world, are shown God's power and mercy. What is Punishment in this world, compared to that in the life to come? Even here there are Signs of the working of His law: plot or plan as men will, it is God's Will that must prevail. This is illustrated in Joseph's story in the preceding Sūra.

*Summary*

The Book of Revelation is true, and is confirmed by the Signs to be seen in visible nature. God Who created such mighty forces in outer nature can raise up man again after death. God's knowledge is all-compassing: so are His power and goodness (xiii. 1-18, and C. 114).

The righteous seek the pleasure of God and find Peace; the evil ones break His Law, cavil and dispute, and reject faith; the wrath of God will take them unawares, but in His own good time (xiii. 19-31, and C. 115).

So was it with apostles before: they were mocked, but the mockers were destroyed, while the righteous rejoiced and were established (xiii. 32-43, and C. 116).

C. 114.— God's Truth comes to man in revelation  
(xiii 1-18.) And in nature. How noble are His works!  
How sublime his government of the world!  
They all declare forth His glory!  
Yet man must strangely resist Faith,  
And ask to see the Signs of His power  
Rather than the Signs of His Mercy!  
Doth not His knowledge search through  
The most hidden things? Are not  
Lightning and Thunder the Signs of His Might  
As well as of His Mercy? He alone  
Is Worthy of praise, and His Truth  
Will stand when all vanities pass  
Always like scum on the torrent of Time.

## Sura XIII.

Ra'd, or Thunder.

*In the name of God, Most Gracious,  
Most Merciful.*

1. **A. L. M.** <sup>1793</sup> These are  
The Signs (or Verses) <sup>1799</sup>  
Of the Book: that which  
Hath been revealed unto thee  
From thy Lord is the Truth;  
But most men believe not.

2. God is He Who raised  
The heavens without any pillars <sup>1800</sup>  
That ye can see; is firmly  
Established on the Throne  
(of Authority); <sup>1801</sup>  
He has subjected the sun  
And the moon (to His Law)!  
Each one runs (its course)  
For a term appointed.  
He doth regulate all affairs, <sup>1802</sup>  
Explaining the Signs in detail,



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

۱- اَلْعَرَسَ تِلْكَ اٰیٰتُ الْكِتٰبِ  
وَالَّذِیْ اُنْزِلَ اِلَیْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ الْحَقُّ  
وَلٰكِنْ اَلْاَکْثَرُ النَّاسِ لَا یُؤْمِنُوْنَ ۝

۲- اَللّٰهُ الَّذِیْ رَفَعَ السَّمٰوٰتِ بِغَیْرِ عَمَدٍ  
تَّرَوْنَهَا ثُمَّ اسْتَوٰی عَلٰی الْعَرْشِ  
وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ  
كُلٌّ یَّجْرِیْ لَاجَلٍ مُّسَمًّی  
یُدَبِّرُ الْأَمْرَ یُفَصِّلُ الْاٰیٰتِ

1798 For A.L.M., see n. 1, n. 25. For A.L.R., see Introduction to S. x. For abbreviated Letters generally see Appendix I. Here there seems to be a combination of the groups A.L.M. and A.L.R. We consider here not only the beginning (A), the middle (L.), and the End (M.), of man's spiritual history, but also the immediate future of the interior of our organisation, such as it appeared to our Ummat towards the close of the Meccan period. But in trying to understand mystic symbolism, we must not be dogmatic. The befitting attitude is to say: God knows best.

1799. Cf. x. 1, n. 1382.

1800. Should we construe the clause "that ye can see" to refer to "pillars" or to "the heavens"? Either is admissible, but I prefer the former. The heavens are supported on no pillars that we can see. What we see is the blue vault of heaven, but there are invisible forces or conditions created by God, which should impress us with His power and glory.

1801. Cf. x. 3, and n. 1386. We must not think that anything came into being by itself or carries out its functions by itself. God is the active Force through which everything has its life and being and through which everything is maintained and supported, even though fixed laws are established for its regulation and government. The "term appointed" limits the duration of their functioning: its ultimate return is to God, as its beginning proceeded from God.

1802. Cf. x. 31, n. 1425. Where the laws of nature are fixed, and everything runs according to its appointed course, the government and regulation behind it is still that of God. Where there is limited free-will as in man, yet the ultimate source of man's faculties is God. God cares for His creatures. He does not, as in the idea of polytheistic Greece, sit apart on Olympus, careless of His creatures.

That ye may believe with certainty  
In the meeting with your Lord.<sup>1803</sup>

لَعَلَّكُمْ يَهْتَفُونَ رَبِّكُمْ تُؤْتُونَ

3. And it is He Who spread out  
The earth, and set thereon  
Mountains standing firm,  
And (flowing) rivers: and fruit  
Of every kind He made  
In pairs, two and two:<sup>1804</sup>  
He draweth the Night as a veil<sup>1805</sup>  
O'er the Day. Behold, verily  
In these things there are Signs  
For those who consider!

وَهُوَ الَّذِي مَدَّ الْأَرْضَ وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا  
رَوَابِي وَأَنْهَارًا  
وَمِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ جَعَلَ فِيهَا زَوْجَيْنِ  
اثْنَيْنِ يُغِشِّي اللَّيْلَ الظَّهَارَ  
إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يُتَفَكَّرُونَ

4. And in the earth are tracts  
(Diverse though) neighbouring,  
And gardens of vines  
And fields sown with corn,  
And palm trees—growing<sup>1806</sup>  
Out of single roots or otherwise:  
Watered with the same water,  
Yet some of them We make  
More excellent than others to eat.<sup>1807</sup>  
Behold, verily in these things

وَفِي الْأَرْضِ قِطْعَةٌ مُجْتَمِعَاتٌ وَجُثَثَاتٌ  
أَعْنَابٌ وَزُرْعٌ وَنَخِيلٌ صُنُوفٌ وَغَيْرُ  
صُنُوفٍ  
يُسْقَى بِمَاءٍ وَاحِدٍ  
وَنُفِصِلُ بَعْضَهَا عَلَى بَعْضٍ فِي الْأَكْلِ

1803. One manifestation of His caring for His creatures, even where a limited amount of free-will is granted for their development, is that He is careful to explain His Signs both in nature and in express and detailed revelation through His Messengers, lest man should have any doubts whether he has to return ultimately to his Lord and account for all his actions during the "term appointed," when he was given some initiative by way of trial and preparation. If man attends carefully to the Signs, he should have no doubt whatever.

1804. I think that this refers to sex in plants, and I see M. P. has translated accordingly. Plants like animals have their reproductive apparatus,—male stamens and female pistils. In most cases the same flower combines both stamens and pistils, but in some cases these organs are specialised in separate flowers, and in some cases, even in separate trees. The date-palm of Arabia and the Papaya of India, are instances of fruit trees which are uni-sexual.

1805. Cf. vii. 54 and n. 1032. The whole passage there may be compared with the whole passage here. Both their similarity and their variation show how closely reasoned each argument is, with expressions exactly appropriate to each occasion.

1806. Does "growing out of single roots or otherwise" qualify "palm trees" or "vines" and "corn" as well? The former construction is adopted by the classical Commentators: in which case the reference is to the fact either that two or more palm trees occasionally grow out of a single root, or that palm trees grow sometimes as odd trees and sometimes in great thick clusters. If the latter construction is adopted, the reference would be to the fact that date-palms (and palms generally) and some other plants arise out of a single tap-root, while the majority of trees arise out of a net-work of roots that spread out extensively. Here is adaptation to soil and water conditions,—another Sign or wonder of Creation.

1807. The date-palm, the crops of food-grains, and the grape-vine are all fed by the same kind of water: yet how different the harvests which they yield! And that applies to all vegetation. The fruit or eatable produce may vary in shape, size, colour, flavour, etc. in endless variety.

There are Signs for those  
Who understand !

5. **ف** If thou dost marvel  
(At their want of faith),  
Strange is their saying :  
"When we are (actually) dust,<sup>1808</sup>  
Shall we indeed then be  
In a creation renewed?" They are  
Those who deny their Lord ! They  
Are those round whose necks  
Will be yokes (of servitude) :<sup>1809</sup>  
They will be Companions  
Of the Fire, to dwell therein  
(For aye)!

6. They ask thee to hasten on  
The evil in preference to the  
good :<sup>1810</sup>  
Yet have come to pass,  
Before them, (many) exemplary  
Punishments ! But verily  
Thy Lord is full of forgiveness  
For mankind for their wrong-doing,  
And verily thy Lord  
Is (also) strict in punishment.

7. **و** And the Unbelievers say :  
"Why is not a Sign sent down  
To him from his Lord ?" <sup>1811</sup>  
But thou art truly

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ○

هـ وَإِنْ تَعْجَبَ فَعَجَبٌ قَوْلُهُمْ  
إِذَا كُنَّا تُرَابًا  
عَمَّا الْفَنِ خَلَقَ جَدِيدَهُ  
أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ  
وَأُولَئِكَ الْأَعْمَلُ فِي أَغْثَائِهِمْ وَأُولَئِكَ  
أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ○

٦ وَيَسْتَعْجِلُونَكَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ قَبْلَ الْحَسَنَةِ  
وَقَدْ خَلَقْتَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمُ الْمُثَلَّ  
وَلَا رَيْبَ لَكَ دُوْا مَغْفِرَةٍ  
لِّلْآثِمِينَ عَلَى ظُلْمِهِمْ  
وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَشَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ○

هـ وَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ  
آيَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِ إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ

1808. After seeing the Signs in nature and the Signs in revelation, it is indeed strange that people should deny their Creator. But if they admit the Signs of the Creator, Who works marvels before their very eyes every day, why should they doubt that when they are reduced to dust, they can be raised up again? If one creation is possible, what difficulty can there be in accepting a renewed creation? It becomes then a question of an obstinate and rebellious will, for which the punishment is described.

1809. *Agīl*: yokes (of servitude): Cf. vii. 157 and n. 1128. The punishment may be conceived of in two stages: immediately, yokes of servitude to superstition, falsehood, etc., as against the freedom in Faith; and finally, the Fire which burns the very soul.

1810. The Unbelievers by way of a taunt say: "If there is a punishment, let us see it come down now." The answer to it is threefold. (1) Why do you want to see the punishment rather than the mercy of God? Which is better? (2) Have you not heard in history of terrible punishments for evil? And have you not before your very eyes seen examples of wickedness brought to book? (3) God works not only in justice and punishment, but also in mercy and forgiveness, and mercy and forgiveness come first.

1811. After all the Signs that have just been mentioned it is mere fractiousness to say, "Bring down a Sign." *Muṣṭafā* brought Signs and credentials as other Prophets did, and, like them, refused to satisfy mere idle curiosity.

A warner, and to every people  
A guide.<sup>1812</sup>

## SECTION 2.

8. God doth know what  
Every female (womb) doth bear,<sup>1813</sup>  
By how much the wombs  
Fall short (of their time  
Or number) or do exceed.  
Every single thing is before  
His sight, in (due) proportion.
9. He knoweth the Unseen  
And that which is open:  
He is the Great,  
The most High.<sup>1814</sup>
10. It is the same (to Him)  
Whether any of you  
Conceal his speech or  
Declare it openly;  
Whether he lie hid by night  
Or walk forth freely by day.<sup>1815</sup>
11. For each (such person)<sup>1816</sup>  
There are (angels) in succession,  
Before and behind him:  
They guard him by command

مُنذِرٌ وَلِكُلِّ قَوْمٍ هَادٍ ۝

هـ- اَللّٰهُ يَعْصِمُ مَا تَحْتَمِلُ كُلُّ اُنْثٰى  
وَمَا تَغِيْضُ الرَّحَامُ وَمَا تَزِدُّاۡدُ  
وَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ عِنْدَهُ بِمِقْدَارٍ ۝

هـ- عَلِيْمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ  
الْكَبِيْرُ السَّعَالِ ۝

ا- سَوَاءٌ مِّنْكُمْ  
مَّنْ اَسَرَ الْقَوْلَ وَمَنْ جَهَرَ بِهِ وَمَنْ  
هُوَ مُسْتَخْفٍ بِاللَّيْلِ وَسَارِبٌ بِالنَّهَارِ ۝  
لَهُۥ مُعَقِّبَاتٌ مِّنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ  
خَلْفِهِ يَحْفَظُوْنَهُ مِّنْ اَمْرِ اللّٰهِ ۝

1812. The last sentence of this verse has usually been interpreted to mean that the Apostle's function was merely to warn, and that guidance was sent by God to every nation through its apostles. I think the following interpretation is equally possible: 'it is itself a Sign that Muḥammad should warn and preach and produce the Qur-ān, and the guidance which he brings is universal guidance, as from God.'

1813. The female womb is just an example, a type, of extreme secrecy. Not even the female herself knows what is in the womb,—whether it is a male young or a female young, whether it is one or more, whether it is to be born short of the standard time or to exceed the standard time. But the most hidden and apparently unknowable things are clear to God's knowledge: there is no mere chance: all things are regulated by God in just measure and proportion. The general proposition comes in the last sentence: "every single thing is before His sight, in (due) proportion."

1814. A verse of matchless rhythm in Arabic.

1815. Our most hidden thoughts and motives are known to Him at all times.

1816. See last verse. Every person, whether he conceals or reveals his thoughts, whether he skulks in darkness or goes about by day,—all are under God's watch and ward. His grace encompasses every one, and again and again protects him, if he will only take the protection, from harm and evil. If in his folly he thinks he can secretly take some pleasure or profit, he is wrong for recording angels record all his thoughts and deeds.

Of God. Verily never  
Will God change the condition  
Of a people until they  
Change it themselves  
(With their own souls).<sup>1817</sup>  
But when (once) God willeth  
A people's punishment,  
There can be no  
Turning it back, nor  
Will they find, besides Him,  
Any to protect.

12. It is He Who doth show you  
The lightning, by way  
Both of fear and of hope: <sup>1818</sup>  
It is He Who doth raise up  
The clouds, heavy  
With (fertilising) rain!

13. Nay, thunder repeateth His  
praises, <sup>1819</sup>  
And so do the angels, with awe: <sup>1820</sup>  
He flingeth the loud-voiced  
Thunder-bolts, and therewith  
He striketh whomsoever He will...  
Yet these (are the men)  
Who (dare to) dispute  
About God, with the strength  
Of His power (supreme)! <sup>1821</sup>

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ  
حَتَّى يَغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ  
وَإِذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِقَوْمٍ سُوءًا  
فَلَا مَرَدَّ لَهُ  
وَمَا لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ وَالٍ ۝

۱۲- هُوَ الَّذِي يُرِيكُمْ الْبَرْقَ  
خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا  
وَيُنْثِنِي السَّحَابَ الْثِقَالَ ۝

۱۳- وَيُسَبِّحُ الرَّعْدُ بِحَمْدِهِ  
وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ مِنْ خِيفَتِهِ  
وَيُرْسِلُ الصَّوَاعِقَ  
فَيُصِيبُ بِهَا مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَهُمْ يُجَادِلُونَ  
فِي اللَّهِ وَهُوَ شَدِيدُ الْحِسَابِ ۝

1817. God is not intent on punishment. He created man virtuous and pure; he gave him intelligence and knowledge; he surrounded him with all sorts of instruments of His grace and mercy. If, in spite of all this, man distorts his own will and goes against God's Will, yet is God's forgiveness open to him if he will take it. It is only when he has made his own sight blind and changed his own nature or soul away from the beautiful mould in which God formed it, that God's Wrath will descend on him and the favourable position in which God placed him will be changed. When once the punishment comes, there is no turning it back. None of the things which he relied upon—other than God—can possibly protect him.

1818. Here then is the climax to the answer of the sarcastic challenge of the Unbelievers for punishment, in language of great sublimity. Why look to evil rather than to good?—to punishment rather than to mercy?—to the fear in the force and fire of the lightning rather than to the hope of good and abundant crops in the rain which will come behind the lightning clouds?

1819. Nay, thunder itself, which may frighten you, is but a tame and beneficent force before Him, declaring His praises, like the rest of creation. THUNDER thus aptly gives the name to this Sura of contrasts, where what we may think terrible is shown to be really a submissive instrument of good in God's hands.

1820. And the angels, whom we think to be beautiful creatures of power and glory nearest to God, yet feel reverence and awe even as they praise His holy name.

1821. Who is puny man, to call God in question? Cf. some variations on this theme in the Book of Job, itself an Arabian book, e.g., chapters 38 to 41.

14. **For Him (alone) is prayer**  
 In Truth:<sup>1822</sup> any others that they  
 Call upon besides Him hear them  
 No more than if they were  
 To stretch forth their hands  
 For water to reach their mouths  
 But it reaches them not:  
 For the prayer of those  
 Without Faith is nothing  
 But (futile) wandering  
 (in the mind).<sup>1823</sup>

۱۴- لَهُ دَعْوَةُ الْحَقِّ وَالَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ  
 مِنْ دُونِهِ  
 لَا يَسْمَعُونَ لَهُمْ شَيْءٌ  
 إِلَّا كَبَاسِطٌ كَفَيْهِ إِلَى الْمَاءِ لِيَبْلُغَهُ فَاهُ  
 وَمَا هُوَ بِبَالِغِهِ  
 وَمَا دُعَاءُ الْكَافِرِينَ إِلَّا فِي ضَلَالٍ ۝

15. Whatever beings<sup>1824</sup> there are  
 In the heavens and the earth  
 Do prostrate themselves to God<sup>1825</sup>  
 (Acknowledging subjection),—with  
 good will  
 Or in spite of themselves:<sup>1826</sup>  
 So do their shadows<sup>1827</sup>  
 In the mornings and evenings.

۱۵- وَلِلَّهِ يَسْجُدُ  
 مَنْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ  
 طَوْعًا وَكَرْهًا  
 وَظِلَالُهُم بِالْعُدُوِّ وَالْاَصَالِ ۝

1822. *Haqq*=truth; right; what is due, befitting, proper. All these meanings are to be understood here. If we worship anything other than God (whether it is idols, stars, powers of nature, spirits, or deified men, or Self, or Power, or Wealth, Science or Art, Talent or Intellect), our worship is both foolish and futile.

1823. Without Faith, it is obvious that prayer or worship has no meaning whatever. It is but an aberration of the mind. But there is a deeper meaning. You may have false faith, as in superstitions or in worshipping things other than God, as explained in the last note. In that case, too, you are pursuing mere phantoms of the mind. When you come to examine it, it is mere imbecility or futility. Worship and prayer are justified only to the One True God.

1824. There is much mystic meaning here, and indeed in the whole of this highly poetical Sūra. Notice that the original of what I have translated "whatever being" is the personal pronoun *man*, not *mā*. This then refers to beings with a personality, e.g., angels, spirits, human beings, and possibly other things of objective (not necessarily material) existence, as contrasted with their Shadows or Simulacra or Appearances, or Phantasms, mentioned at the end of the verse. Both these Beings and their Shadows are subject to the Will of God. See notes 1825 and 1827.

1825. "Prostrate themselves": the posture means that they recognise their subjection to God's Will and Law, whether they wish it or not.

1826. "In spite of themselves": Satan and the Spirits of Evil. They would like to get away from the control of the All-good God, but they cannot, and they have to acknowledge His supremacy and lordship over them.

1827. Even the Shadows—creations of the Imagination, or projections from other things and dependent on the other things for their existence, as shadows are to substance—even such shadows are subject to God's Laws and Will, and cannot arise or have any effect on our minds except by His permission. The Shadows are longest and therefore most prominent when the sun is level, and tend to disappear as the sun approaches the zenith. But even when they are longest and most prominent, they are still subject to God's Will and Law. The sun itself in this connection has a mystic meaning, referring to Intelligence, true Insight, the divine Light.



16. Say: "Who is the Lord and Sustainer <sup>1828</sup>

Of the heavens and the earth?"

Say: "(It is) God."

Say: "Do ye then take

(For worship) protectors other

Than Him, such as have

No power either for good

Or for harm to themselves?" <sup>1829</sup>

Say: "Are the blind equal

With those who see?

Or the depths of darkness

Equal with Light?"

Or do they assign to God <sup>1830</sup>

Partners who have created

(Anything) as He has created,

So that the creation seemed

To them similar?

Say: "God is the Creator

Of all things: He is

The One, the Supreme and

Irresistible."

مَنْ رَبُّكَ التَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

قُلِ اللَّهُ

قُلْ أَفَاتُخَذُكُمْ مِنْ دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ

لَا يَمْلِكُونَ لِأَنفُسِهِمْ

نَفْعًا وَلَا ضَرًّا

قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الْأَعْمَى وَالْبَصِيرَةُ

أَمْ هَلْ تَسْتَوِي الظُّلُمَاتُ وَالنُّورُ

أَمْ جَعَلُوا لِلَّهِ شُرَكَاءَ خَلَقُوا

كَتَابِهِمْ فَتَشَابَهَ الْخَلْقُ عَلَيْهِمْ

قُلِ اللَّهُ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ

وَهُوَ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ

17. He sends down water <sup>1831</sup>  
From the skies, and the channels  
Flow, each according to its measure:  
But the torrent bears away  
The foam that mounts up  
To the surface. Even so,

١- أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً

فَسَالَتْ أَوْدِيَةٌ بِقَدَرِهَا

فَاخْتَمَلَ السَّيْلُ زَبَدًا رَابِيًا

1828. The meaning of "Rabb" is explained in n. 20, to ii. 2.

1829. Cf. v. 79.

1830. This verse may be analysed into six parts, each two parts going together like question and answer. Each except the fifth part is introduced by the word "Say", which is equivalent in old Arabic to inverted commas. The fifth part, "or do they assign.....similar?" is not introduced by "Say", because it is in the indirect form.

(1) Who is the Lord and Sustainer of the Worlds? It is God. (2) And yet you worship other gods? No, no one can be equal to Him, any more than darkness is equal to light. (3) Your other gods have created nothing by which you can be misled? No indeed; He is the only Creator, the One and Supreme.

1831. This verse is full of parables. (1) It is God Who sends rain and He sends it to all. See how it flows in different channels according to their capacities. Some are sluggish; some have a swift current. Some form great rivers and irrigate wide tracts of country; some are clear crystal streams, perhaps in hilly tracts, with beds of clean pebbles which you can see through the water. Some produce delicious edible fish; and some are infested by crocodiles or injurious monsters. And there are degrees and degrees among brooks, streams, lakes, rivers, and seas. So with the rain of God's mercy and the knowledge and wisdom and guidance which He sends. All can receive it. Different ones will respond according to their capacities. (2) In the physical world, water is pure and beneficial. But froth and scum will gather according to local conditions. As the floods will carry off the scum and purify the water, so will the flood of God's spiritual mercy carry away our spiritual scum and purify the water. (3) The froth may make a great show on the surface, but it will not last. So will there be frothy knowledge, which will disappear, but God's Truth will endure.

From that (ore) which they heat <sup>1832</sup>  
 In the fire, to make ornaments  
 Or utensils therewith,  
 There is a scum likewise.  
 Thus doth God (by parables)  
 Show forth Truth and Vanity.  
 For the scum disappears  
 Like froth cast out ;  
 While that which is for the good  
 Of mankind remains  
 On the earth. Thus doth God  
 Set forth parables.

وَمِمَّا يُوقِدُونَ عَلَيْهِ فِي النَّارِ ابْتِغَاءَ  
 حُلِيِّهِمْ أَوْ مَتَاعٍ رَبِّكَ يَبْخُلُ  
 كَذَلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْحَقَّ وَالْبَاطِلَ  
 فَاَمَّا الزَّبَدُ فَيَذْهَبُ جُفَاءً  
 وَامَّا مَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ فَيَمْكُثُ فِي الْأَرْضِ  
 كَذَلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ ٥

18. For those who respond  
 To their Lord, are (all)  
 Good things. But those  
 Who respond not to Him,—  
 Even if they had all  
 That is in the heavens  
 And on earth, and as much more,  
 (In vain) would they offer it <sup>1833</sup>  
 For ransom. For them  
 Will the reckoning be terrible :  
 Their abode will be Hell,—  
 What a bed of misery !

١٨- لِلَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا لِرَبِّهِمْ الْخَيْرُ  
 وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يُسْجِنُونَ  
 لَوْ أَنَّ لَهُمْ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ  
 وَمِثْلَهُ مَعَهُ لَافْتَدَوْا بِهِ  
 أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ سُوءُ الْحِسَابِ  
 وَمَأْوَاهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ وَبِئْسَ لِلْكَافِرِينَ

فَقَالَ لَهُ

فَقَالَ لَهُ

- C. 115.—The seeing and the blind are not alike :  
 (xiii. 19-31.) Nor are those blessed with Faith and those without.  
 The former seek God, and attain  
 Peace and blessedness in their hearts,  
 And a final Home of rest : the latter  
 Are in a state of Curse, and their End  
 Is terrible. If God in His wisdom  
 Postpones retribution, it is for a time.  
 His promise never fails : it will come  
 To pass in His own good time.  
 In all things it is for Him to command.

### SECTION 3.

19. ~~As~~ then one who doth know  
 That that which hath been

١٩- أَفَمَنْ يَعْلَمُ مِثْلًا

1832. In continuation of the last note, the fourth parable is that of metal ores : (4) the ore is full of baser admixture, but the fire will separate the gold from the dross for ornaments, or (5) some metal of household utility, with which you make every-day utensils, which the fire will separate from admixtures which you do not want. So the fire of God's test, either by adversity or by affluence, will search out the true metal in us and reject the dross. It will show us what is valuable or what is useful, from all sorts of scum and vanity which we collect and miscall knowledge.

Revealed unto thee  
From thy Lord is the Truth,  
Like one who is blind ? <sup>1834</sup>  
It is those who are  
Endued with understanding  
That receive admonition ;—

20. Those who fulfil the Covenant  
Of God and fail not  
In their plighted word ;

21. Those who join together  
Those things which God  
Hath commanded to be joined, <sup>1835</sup>  
Hold their Lord in awe,  
And fear the terrible reckoning ;

22. Those who patiently persevere,  
Seeking the countenance of their  
Lord ;  
Establish regular prayers ; spend,  
Out of (the gifts) We have bestowed  
For their sustenance, secretly  
And openly ; and turn off Evil  
With good : for such is  
The final attainment  
Of the (Eternal) Home, — <sup>1836</sup>

23. Gardens of perpetual bliss :  
They shall enter there,  
As well as the righteous  
Among their fathers, their spouses,

أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنَ رَبِّكَ الْحَقَّ  
كَمَنْ هُوَ أَعْمَى  
إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولَئِكَ الْأَلْبَابُ ۝

٢٠- الَّذِينَ يُوفُونَ بِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ  
وَلَا يَنْقُضُونَ الْعَيْثَاقَ ۝

٢١- وَالَّذِينَ يَجْمَعُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَنْ  
يُوصَلَ وَيَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ وَيَخَافُونَ  
سُوءَ الْحِسَابِ ۝

٢٢- وَالَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا ابْتِغَاءَ وَجْهِ رَبِّهِمْ  
وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنْفَقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ  
سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً  
وَيُذِرُونَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ السَّيِّئَةَ  
أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ ۝

٢٣- جَنَّاتٌ عَدْنٌ يَدْخُلُونَهَا  
وَمَنْ صَلَحَ مِنْ آبَائِهِمْ وَأَزْوَاجِهِمْ

1834. In this section the contrast between Faith and Righteousness on the one hand and Infidelity and Evil on the other is set out. The righteous man is known as one who (1) receives admonition ; (2) is true to his covenants ; (3) follows the universal Religion of Faith and Practice joined together ; (4) is patient and persevering in seeking God ; and in practical matters he is known to be (5) regular in prayer ; (6) generous in true charity, whether open or secret ; and (7) not revengeful, but anxious to turn off evil with good, thus breknig the chain of evil which tends to perpetuate itself.

1835. That is, join faith with practice, love of God with love of man, and respect for all Prophets alike, i.e. follow the universal Religion, and not odd bits of it.

1836. Their journey in this life was at best a sojourn. The final Bliss is their eternal Home, which is further prefigured in the two following verses.

And their offspring : <sup>1837</sup>  
 And angels shall enter unto them  
 From every gate  
 (with the salutation) :

24. "Peace unto you for that ye  
 Persevered in patience! Now  
 How excellent is the final Home!"

25. But those who break  
 The Covenant of God, after  
 Having plighted their word thereto,  
 And cut asunder those things <sup>1838</sup>  
 Which God has commanded  
 To be joined, and work mischief  
 In the land ;—on them  
 Is the Curse ; for them  
 Is the terrible Home ! <sup>1839</sup>

26. God doth enlarge, or grant  
 By (strict) measure, the  
 Sustenance <sup>1840</sup>  
 (Which He giveth) to whomso  
 He pleaseth. (The worldly) rejoice  
 In the life of this world :  
 But the life of this world  
 Is but little comfort  
 In the Hereafter. <sup>1841</sup>

وَذُرِّيَّتِهِمُ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ  
 يَدْخُلُونَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ كُلِّ بَابٍ ۝

٢٣- سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ بِمَا صَبَرْتُمْ فَنِعْمَ  
 عُقْبَى الدَّارِ ۝

٢٥- وَالَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ عَهْدَ اللَّهِ مِنْ  
 بَعْدِ مِيثَاقِهِ  
 وَيَقْطَعُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَنْ يُوصَلَ  
 وَيُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ  
 أُولَئِكَ لَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ وَلَهُمْ سَوْءُ الدَّارِ ۝

٢٦- اللَّهُ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ  
 وَفَرِحُوا بِالْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا  
 وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا فِي الْآخِرَةِ  
 إِلَّا مَتَاعٌ ۝

1837. The relationships of this life are temporal, but love in righteousness is eternal. In the eternal Gardens of Bliss the righteous will be re-united with all those near and dear ones whom they loved, provided only that they were righteous also ; for in eternity nothing else counts. Blood-relationships and marriage relationships create certain physical bonds in this life, which may lead to much good, and possibly also to evil. All that is physical or evil will go. But the good will come forth with a new meaning in the final Reckoning. Thus ancestors and descendants, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters (for *Zurriyat* includes them), whose love was pure and sanctified, will find new bliss in the perfecting of their love and will see a new and mystic meaning in the old and ephemeral bonds. Can we wonder at Jacob's re-union with Joseph, or that of Moses with Aaron, or of Muhammad Mustafa with the Lady Khadija ? In fact all the Righteous will be re-united in the Hereafter (xii. 101).

1838. This is the opposite of the things explained in xiii. 21 above, n. 1835.

1839. This is in contrast to the state of the blessed, described in xiii. 22-24 above. The Curse is the opposite of the Bliss, and the Terrible Home is the opposite of the Eternal Home, the Gardens of perpetual bliss.

1840. God, the Sustainer and Cherisher of all His creatures, gives sustenance to all,—the sustenance including all means for their physical, moral, intellectual and spiritual growth and development according to their needs and capacities. To some He grants it in abundance ; to others He gives it in strict measure. No one can question Him, for His Will is supreme, and it is the measure of all good.

1841. Cf. ix. 38. The meaning here may also be : This present life is just a furniture, a convenience, a stepping stone, a probation, for the life to come. In itself it is less important than the Hereafter.

## SECTION 4.

27. ~~The~~ The Unbelievers say: "Why  
Is not a Sign sent down  
To him from his Lord?" <sup>1842</sup>  
Say: "Truly God leaveth,  
To stray, whom He will;  
But He guideth to Himself  
Those who turn to Him  
In penitence,—

۲۷- وَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ آيَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِ قُلْ إِنْ اللَّهُ يُعْصِلُ مِنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَهْدِي إِلَىٰ الْمَنِيعِ مِنْ أَنْتَابٍ ۖ

28. "Those who believe, and whose hearts  
Find satisfaction in the remembrance  
Of God: for without doubt  
In the remembrance of God  
Do hearts find satisfaction."<sup>1748</sup>

۲۸- الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُمْ  
بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ  
أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ ۝

29. "For those who believe  
And work righteousness,  
Is (every) blessedness,<sup>1844</sup>  
And a beautiful place  
Of (final) return."

٢٩- الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ  
طُوبَى لَهُمْ وَحَسُنَ مَا يُبَدَّلُ

30. Thus have We sent thee  
Amongst a People before whom  
(Long since) have (other) Peoples  
(Gone and) passed away; <sup>1645</sup>  
In order that thou mightest  
Rehearse unto them what We  
Send down unto thee by inspiration :

۳- كَذَلِكَ أَرْسَلْنَا فِي أُمَمٍ  
قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهَا أُمَمٌ  
لَتَتَّبِعُوا عَلَيْهِمُ الذِّكْرَ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ

1842. The question is repeated from xiii. 7 above : for the line of reasoning there suggested in answer is now completed, and another line of reasoning is now taken up. God provides every guidance for those who turn to Him in penitence, but He will leave those to wander astray who deliberately close their eyes and their hearts to His grace and the comfort that comes from remembering Him and celebrating His praises.

1843. The Sign or Miracle is not something external: it is something internal, something in your mind, heart, and soul. It depends on your inner spiritual experience. If you turn to God, that light, that experience, will come. If you do not, God will not force you.

1844. "Blessedness": *Tūbā*: an internal state of satisfaction, an inward joy which is difficult to describe in words, but which reflects itself in the life of the good man, through good and ill fortune, through good report and evil. And then, there is always the final goal to which his eyes are turned, the beautiful Home of rest in the Hereafter, after this life's struggles are over. That goal is God Himself.

1845. Our Prophet came later in time than other Prophets, to complete their Message and universalise Religion. And certainly it is after his age that the process of the unification of the world began. That process is not complete yet, but is proceeding apace.

Yet do they reject (Him),  
The Most Gracious!  
Say: "He is my Lord!  
There is no god but He!  
On Him is my trust,  
And to Him do I turn!" 1846

31. If there were a Qur-ān  
With which mountains were moved,  
Or the earth were cloven asunder,  
Or the dead were made to speak,  
(This would be the one!)  
But, truly, the Command is  
With God in all things! 1847  
Do not the Believers know,  
That, had God (so) willed,  
He could have guided  
All mankind (to the Right)?

But the Unbelievers,—never  
Will disaster cease to seize  
Them for their (ill) deeds,  
Or to settle close to their homes,  
Until the promise of God  
Come to pass, for, verily,  
God will not fail  
In His promise. 1848

وَهُمْ يَكْفُرُونَ بِالرَّحْمَنِ  
قُلْ هُوَ رَبِّي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ  
عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَإِلَيْهِ مَتَابُ ○

٣١- وَلَوْ أَنَّ قُرْآنًا سُيِّرَتْ بِهِ الْجِبَالُ  
أَوْ قُطِعَتْ بِهِ الْأَرْضُ  
أَوْ كَلِمَةٌ بِهِ الْمَوْتُ  
بَلْ لِلَّهِ الْأَمْرُ جَمِيعًا  
أَفَلَمْ يَأْتِنِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا  
أَنْ لَوْ يَشَاءُ اللَّهُ لَهْدَى النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا  
وَلَا يَزَالِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا تُصِيبُهُمْ  
بِمَا صَنَعُوا قَارِعَةٌ أَوْ تَحُلُ قَرِيبًا مِّنْ  
دَارِهِمْ حَتَّى يَأْتِيَ وَعْدُ اللَّهِ  
إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَخْلِفُ الْوَعْدَ ۚ

- C. 116.—The mockery of God's apostles is an old game  
(xiii. 32-43.) Of the world. But God's Truth will come  
To its own in good time. The End  
Of the righteous is their Home of Bliss,  
And they rejoice in the revelations  
They receive. The Messengers of God  
Take their due share in the life  
Of the world; they win through by God's grace  
Against all the plots of the world.  
Their witness is from God, through His revelation.

1846. Faith tells us that no amount of opposition from Unbelievers can ever stop God's Plan.  
1847. Everything is possible and in God's power. His Plan is beneficent and all-embracing.  
But it is not for His creatures to dictate to Him, or demand what He should do, or how He should do it. The Command is with God in all things. The Believers know His omnipotence, and they also know that He will order His world for the best.

1848. Let not the Unbelievers think that if they seem to prosper for a time, that is the end of the matter. They are warned about three things. (1) Their ill deeds must carry evil consequences for them all the time, though they may not perceive them for a certain time. (2) Their homes, their places of resort, the circles in which they move, will also be haunted by their ill deeds and their consequences. For evil makes a complex of its environment. The walls of Jericho, when they fall, must bring down all Jericho in its ruins. (3) The ultimate Disaster, the final Reckoning, must come, for God never fails in His promise. True values must eventually be restored: the good to the good, and the evil to the evil.

The Commentators draw illustrations from the life of the Apostle, his exile from Mecca, and his restoration. A similar miracle works in all history. But the Command is with God.

## SECTION 5.

32. Mocked were (many)  
apostles<sup>1849</sup>  
Before thee: but I granted  
Respite to the Unbelievers,  
And finally I punished them:  
Then how (terrible) was My  
requital!<sup>1850</sup>

33. Is then He Who standeth  
Over every soul (and knoweth)  
All that it doth,  
(Like any others)? And yet  
They ascribe partners to God.  
Say: "But name them!"<sup>1851</sup>  
Is it that ye will  
Inform Him of something  
He knoweth not on earth,  
Or is it (just) a show  
Of words?" Nay! to those  
Who believe not, their pretence<sup>1852</sup>  
Seems pleasing, but they are  
Kept back (thereby) from the Path.  
And those whom God leaves  
To stray, no one can guide.

34. For them is a Penalty  
In the life of this world,<sup>1853</sup>  
But harder, truly, is the Penalty  
Of the Hereafter: and defender  
Have they none against God.

35. The parable of the Garden  
Which the righteous are  
promised!—

٣٢- وَلَقَدْ اسْتَهْزَأُوا رُسُلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ  
فَأَمَلَيْتَ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا  
ثُمَّ أَخَذْتَهُمْ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عِقَابِ ○

٣٣- أَفَمَنْ هُوَ أَشَرُّ عَلَى كُلِّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا  
كَسَبَتْ وَجَعَلُوا لِلَّهِ شُرَكَاءَ  
فُلْ سَنُؤْتِهِمْ  
أَمْ تُؤْتُونَهُ بِمَا لَا يَعْلَمُ فِي الْأَرْضِ  
أَمْ يَبْطِئُ عَنْ الْقَوْلِ  
بَلْ زَيْنَ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مَكْرُهُمْ  
وَصُدُّوا عَنِ السَّبِيلِ  
وَمَنْ يُضِلِلِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ هَادٍ ○

٣٤- لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا  
وَالْعَذَابُ الْأَخِيرَةُ أَشَقُّ  
وَمَا لَهُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِنْ وَاقٍ ○

٣٥- مَثَلُ الْجَنَّةِ الَّتِي وُعدَ الْمُتَّقُونَ

1849. Cf. vii. 10.

1850. The punishment was in many cases deferred. But when it did come, how terrible and exemplary it was!

1851. Cf. xii. 40. 'You have but to name your false gods, and you will see that they are nothing but names. There is no reality behind them, whereas God is the One great Reality. He penetrates everything through and through, and knows all things. Do you dare to tell Him of something on earth that He does not know? Or is it just a trick or a show of words?'

1852. All pretences and fancies seem attractive to their inventors, but alas! they are a great obstruction to the Path of Religion and Truth. However, if by their contumacy, they have cut themselves off from God's grace, who can guide them or reclaim them from their errors?

1853. The consequences of sin may be felt in this life itself, but they are nothing compared to the final penalties in the life to come.







(Before it is all accomplished),—  
Thy duty is to make  
(The Message) reach them :  
It is Our part  
To call them to account.

وَأَتَيْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْبَلَاءَ  
وَعَلَيْنَا الْحِسَابُ ○

41. See they not that We  
Gradually reduce the land  
(In their control) from its  
Outlying borders <sup>1865</sup> ? (Where)  
God

Commands, there is none  
To put back His command :  
And He is Swift  
In calling to account.

۴۱- أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا نَأْتِي الْأَرْضَ  
نَنْقُصُهَا مِنْ أَطْرَافِهَا  
وَاللَّهُ يَخْتَصِمُ لَمْعُونٍ  
وَهُوَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ ○

42. Those before them did (also)  
Devise plots; but in all things  
The master-planning is God's, <sup>1866</sup>  
He knoweth the doings  
Of every soul: and soon  
Will the Unbelievers know  
Who gets home in the End.

۴۲- وَقَدْ مَكَرَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ  
فَلِلَّهِ الْمَكْرُ جَمِيعًا  
يَعْلَمُ مَا تَكْسِبُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ  
وَسَيَعْلَمُ الْكَافِرِينَ عِقَبَى الدَّارِ ○

43. The Unbelievers say : " No  
apostle <sup>1867</sup>  
Art thou." Say : " Enough  
For a witness between me  
And you is God, and such  
As have knowledge of the  
Book." <sup>1868</sup>

۴۳- وَيَقُولُ الْكَافِرِينَ كَفَرُوا أَسَنتُ مُرْسَلًا  
قُلْ كَفَى بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ  
وَمَنْ عِنْدَهُ عِلْمُ الْكِتَابِ ○

1865. In the Apostle's ministry at Mecca, the most stiff-necked opposition came from the seat and centre of power in Mecca. The humbler people—the fringe of Meccan society—came in readily, as also did some tribes round about Mecca. After the Hijrat there was a hard struggle between Mecca and Medina, and at last the bloodless conquest of Mecca in A.H. 8 made the Pagan structure finally collapse, though it had already been sapped to its foundations. So, generally, Truth finds easiest entrance through the humble and lowly, and not in the beginning at the headquarters of power, but in the fulness of time it makes its way everywhere with irresistible force.

1866. Cf. iii. 54, and n. 393.

1867. The enemies of Islam have to acknowledge that Muḥammad was a great and noble character, but they deny his apostleship. He could point to his credentials from God in the work which he achieved, and the Qur-ān which he brought.

1868. That is, those who have knowledge of revelation generally will recognise God's revelation in the holy Qur-ān. An alternative reading is "min 'indi-hi", which is written the same in Arabic, with only three vowel points different. If we adopt that, the last clause will be : "and from Him is (all) knowledge of the Book" : i. e., 'as all knowledge of the Book comes from God, the Qur-ān also bears witness to me'.

INTRODUCTION TO SŪRA XIV (*Ibrāhīm*).

For the chronology and the general argument of this Sūra in the series Sūras x. to xv., see introduction to S. x.

The special subject-matter of this Sūra is a continuation of the concluding portion of the last Sūra, which explained how God's revelation gains ground in spite of selfish men's opposition. Here illustrations are given from the story of Moses and Abraham, and Abraham's Prayer for Mecca forms the core of the Sūra.

*Summary.*

Revelation leads man from darkness to light. It comes to each nation in its own language and for its own special circumstances. So was it with Moses and other apostles. There was a conflict of evil with good, but evil was destroyed. Parable of the Goodly Tree (xiv. 1-27, and C. 117).

Why will not men receive God's grace? Why will they choose to go astray? Abraham prayed to be saved from infidelity, himself and his posterity, and he prayed for Mecca, the city of the new revelation through Arabia. Good and Evil will find their proper retribution, and God's Plan of Unity will prevail (xiv. 28-52, and C. 118).

C. 117.— Revelation leads mankind from the depths  
(xiv. 1-27.) Of darkness into light. It comes

To every age and nation in its own  
Language. So was it before; so will it be  
Always. The apostles were doubted,  
Insulted, threatened, and persecuted,  
But their trust was sure in God.  
It is Evil that will be wiped out.  
God's Truth is as a goodly tree,  
Firmly established on its roots,  
Stretching its branches high and wide,  
And bearing good fruit at all times.

## Sūra XIV.

*Ibrahim*, or Abraham.*In the name of God, Most Gracious,  
Most Merciful.*

1. **A. I. R.** <sup>1869</sup> A Book  
Which We have revealed  
Unto thee, in order that  
Thou mightest lead mankind  
Out of the depths of darkness  
Into light—by the leave <sup>1870</sup>  
Of their Lord—to the Way  
Of (Him) the Exalted in Power,  
Worthy of all Praise!—<sup>1871</sup>
2. Of God, to Whom do belong  
All things in the heavens  
And on earth!  
But alas for the Unbelievers <sup>1872</sup>  
For a terrible Penalty  
(Their Unfaith will bring them) !—
3. Those who love the life <sup>1873</sup>  
Of this world more than  
The Hereafter, who hinder (men)  
From the Path of God  
And seek therein something  
crooked :  
They are astray  
By a long distance.



بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

۱- اَلرَّحْمٰنُ كَتَبَ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ  
اِلَيْكَ لِتُخْرِجَ النَّاسَ  
مِنَ الظُّلُمٰتِ اِلَى النُّوْرِ  
يَاۤاٰدُنْ رَدِّمْ اِلَى صِرَاطِ الْعَزِيْزِ الْحَمِيْدِ ۝

۲- اللّٰهُ الَّذِي  
لَهُ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى الْاَرْضِ  
وَوَيْلٌ لِّلْكَافِرِيْنَ مِنْ عَذَابٍ شَدِيْدٍ ۝

۳- الَّذِيْنَ يَسْتَحِبُّوْنَ الْحَيٰوةَ الدُّنْيَا عَلَى  
الْاٰخِرَةِ وَيَصُدُّوْنَ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ  
وَيَبْغُوْنَهَا بَعْوَجا  
اُولٰٓئِكَ فِى ضَلٰلٍ بَعِيْدٍ ۝

1869. For these Mystic Letters see Introduction to S. x.

1870. It is insisted on that every apostle speaks not from himself but from God. His leading into the light is but by the grace and mercy of God, not by any power of his own, or by any merit of those who hear him.

1871. In this and the next verse where the sentence is completed, three qualities of God are mentioned, viz., (1) His exalted position above all Creation; (2) His goodness, which entitles Him, and Him alone, to Praise; and (3) His Power in all heavens and earth. Thus He stands in no need of man's worship; His goodness is all for the good of man (and His creatures); and His control over His creatures is complete; so He can carry out His Will and Plan.

1872. See the last note. That being the case, in what a sad plight are those who reject the Faith and Grace offered to them, and draw down on themselves all the terrible consequences of that rejection,—the Wrath to come!

1873. The Unbelievers are here characterised in three ways: (1) they love this ephemeral life and its vanities more than the true Life which goes into the Hereafter; (2) they not only harm themselves but mislead others; (3) their own crooked minds search for something crooked in God's straight Path (Cf. vii. 45). But in doing so, they go farther and farther from the Truth.

4. ~~We~~ We sent not an apostle  
Except (to teach) in the  
language<sup>1874</sup>  
Of his (own) people, in order  
To make (things) clear to them.  
Now God leaves straying  
Those whom He pleases  
And guides whom He pleases:<sup>1875</sup>  
And He is Exalted in Power,  
Full of Wisdom.

٤- وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رُسُولٍ  
إِلَّا بِلِسَانٍ قَوْمِهِ لِيُبَيِّنَ لَهُمْ  
فَيُضِلَّ اللَّهُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ  
وَيَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ  
وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ۝

5. We sent Moses with Our Signs  
(And the command), "Bring out  
Thy people from the depths  
Of darkness into light,  
And teach them to remember  
The Days of God."<sup>1876</sup> Verily  
In this there are Signs  
For such as are firmly patient  
And constant,—grateful and  
appreciative.<sup>1877</sup>

٥- وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا مُوسَى بِآيَاتِنَا  
أَنْ أَخْرِجْ قَوْمَكَ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ  
وَذَكِّرْهُمْ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ  
إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ  
لِكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُورٍ ۝

6. Remember! Moses said  
To his people: "Call to mind  
The favour of God to you  
When He delivered you"<sup>1878</sup>

٦- وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَى لِقَوْمِهِ  
اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ أَنْجَاكُمْ

1874. If the object of a Message is to make things clear, it must be delivered in the language current among the people to whom the apostle is sent. Through them it can reach all mankind. There is even a wider meaning for "language." It is not merely a question of alphabets, letters, or words. Each age or people—or world in a psychological sense—casts its thoughts in a certain mould or form. God's Message—being universal—can be expressed in all moulds and forms, and is equally valid and necessary for all grades of humanity, and must therefore be explained to each according to his or her capacity or receptivity. In this respect the Qur-ān is marvellous. It is for the simplest as well as the most advanced.

1875. "Whom He pleases": the usual expression for *Mashīyat*, the universal Will and Plan, which is all-wise and on the highest plane of goodness and righteousness.

1876. "The Days of God": the days when God's mercy was specially shown to them. Every day and every hour and minute, God's grace flows to us abundantly, but there are special events in personal or national history which may be commemorated as Red-letter Days. Those to the Israelites were set out in great detail in ii.40-61 and in other places.

1877. *Ṣabbār* is the intensive form, and includes all the ideas implied in *Ṣabr* (ii. 45 and n. 61, and ii. 153, n. 157) in an intensive degree. *Shakār* and *Shākīr* have in them the idea of appreciation, recognition, gratitude as shown in deeds of goodness and righteousness. Both terms are applied to God as well as to men. A slight distinction in shades of meaning may be noted. *Shakār* implies that the appreciation is even for the smallest favours and response on the other side; it is a mental attitude independent of specific facts. *Shākīr* implies bigger and more specific things.

1878. Cf. ii. 49. The reference back to Israel and Moses serves a double purpose—as an appeal to the People of the Book, and as a reminder to the Quraish of the favour now conferred on them by the coming among them of a greater Prophet than Moses.

From the people of Pharaoh :  
They set you hard tasks  
And punishments, slaughtered  
Your sons, and let your women-folk  
Live: therein was  
A tremendous trial from your  
Lord."

## SECTION 2.

7. **And** remember! your Lord  
Caused to be declared (publicly) :  
"If ye are grateful, I will  
Add more (favours) unto you ;  
But if ye show ingratitude,<sup>1879</sup>  
Truly my punishment  
Is terrible indeed."
8. And Moses said : "If ye  
Show ingratitude,<sup>1880</sup> ye and all  
On earth together,—yet  
Is God Free of all wants,<sup>1881</sup>  
Worthy of all praise.
9. **Was** not the story  
Reached you, (oh people !), of those  
Who (went) before you ?—  
Of the People of Noah,  
And 'Ad, and Thamūd?—  
And of those who (came)  
After them? None knows them<sup>1882</sup>  
But God. To them came

مَنْ أَلْ فَرَعَوْنَ يَسْؤُونَكَ سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ  
وَيَذْبَحُونَ أَبْنَاءَكُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيُونَ نِسَاءَكُمْ  
وَفِي ذَلِكَ  
بَلَاءٌ مِمَّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ عَظِيمٌ

٤- وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكُمْ  
لَئِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ  
وَلَئِنْ كَفَرْتُمْ  
إِنَّ عَذَابِي لَشَدِيدٌ ○

٨- وَقَالَ مُوسَى إِنَّ تَكْفُرًا  
أَنْتُمْ وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا  
وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَغَفُورٌ حَكِيمٌ ○

٩- أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ نَبَأُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ  
قَوْمُ نُوحٍ وَعَادُ وَثَمُودُ  
وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ  
لَا يَعْلَمُهُمْ إِلَّا اللَّهُ

1879. The various shades of meaning in *Shakara* are explained in n. 1877 above. *Kafara* implies: (1) to reject Faith, as in ii. 6 and n. 30; (2) to be ungrateful for mercies and favours received, as here; (3) to resist God or Faith, as in iii. 13; (4) to deny (the Signs of God), as in iii. 21, or deny the mission of apostles, as in xiv. 9. *Kāfir* in the most general sense may be translated "Unbeliever".

1880. Ingratitude not only in feeling or words, but in disobedience, and wilful rejection and rebellion. If the whole of you band together against God, you do not detract from God's power one atom, because God does not depend upon you for anything, and His goodness and righteousness and praiseworthiness cannot be called in question by your contumacy.

1881. Cf. in Milton's sonnet On his Blindness: "God doth not need either man's work or His own gifts!"

1882. Even the names of all the Prophets are not known to men, much less the details of their story. If some "news" of them (for the word translated "story" may also be translated "news") reaches us, it is to give us spiritual instruction for our own lives.

Apostles with Clear (Signs);  
But they put their hands <sup>1883</sup>  
Up to their mouths, and said:  
"We do deny that ye  
Have been sent (on a mission),  
And we are really  
In suspicious (disquieting) doubt <sup>1884</sup>  
As to that to which  
Ye invite us."

جَاءَهُمْ رَسُولُهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ  
فَرَدُّوا أَيْدِيَهُمْ فِي أَفْوَاهِهِمْ  
وَقَالُوا إِنَّا كَفَرْنَا بِمَا أُرْسِلْتُمْ بِهِ وَإِنَّا  
لَفِي شَكٍّ مِمَّا تَدْعُونَا إِلَيْهِ مُرِيدِينَ ○

10. Their apostles said: "Is there  
A doubt about God,  
The Creator of the heavens  
And the earth? It is He <sup>1885</sup>  
Who invites you, in order  
That He may forgive you  
Your sins and give you  
Respite for a term appointed!"  
They said: "Ah! ye are  
No more than human,  
Like ourselves! Ye wish  
To turn us away from  
The (gods) our fathers  
Used to worship: then  
Bring us some clear authority." <sup>1886</sup>

١٠- قَالَتْ رُسُلُهُمْ إِنْ لَئِي شَيْءٌ  
فَأُظْهِرَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ  
يَدْعُوكُمْ لِيَغْفِرَ لَكُمْ مِنْ ذُنُوبِكُمْ  
وَيُؤَخِّرَكُمْ إِلَى أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى  
قَالُوا إِن أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُنَا  
تُرِيدُونَ أَنْ تَتَّعِدُوا عِبَادَكَ كَانَ يَجِدُ  
أَبَاؤُنَا قَاتِلِينَ أَوْ قَاتِلِينَ مُّشْرِكِينَ ○

11. Their apostles said to them:  
"True, we are human  
Like yourselves, but God  
Doth grant His grace

١١- قَالَتْ لَهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ إِنْ نَحْنُ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ  
مِثْلُكُمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَمُنُّ عَلَى

1883. That is, either that the Unbelievers metaphorically put their hands up to the mouths of the Prophets to try to prevent them from proclaiming their Message, or that the Unbelievers put up their fingers to their own mouths, as much as to say "Don't listen to them," or bite their own fingers in token of incontinent rage. Whatever construction we adopt, the meaning is that they were intolerant of their apostles, even as the Quraish were intolerant of Muṣṭafā and did all they could to suppress God's Truth.

1884. Cf. xi. 62. The distinction between *Shakk* and *raib* may be noted. *Shakk* is intellectual doubt, a doubt as to fact: is it so, or is it not? *Raib* is something more than intellectual doubt; a suspicion that there is fraud or deception; something that upsets your moral belief, and causes a disquiet in your soul. In lii. 30, it is used as equivalent to "calamity" or "disaster", some punishment or evil. Both kinds of doubts and suspicions are hinted at against men of God.

1885. The apostles (generally) clear both kinds of doubt. "You cannot doubt the existence of God! Behold His works! We are not speaking for ourselves or deceiving you. We speak according to the Message of inspiration from God." Notice that the doubters had said to the Prophets, "Ye invite us." The Prophets say: "It is God who invites you, and He does it to save you by His grace, and give you plenty of time (but not indefinite time) for repentance and amendment."

1886. Infidelity is illogical and argues in a circle. If the apostle speaks of God, the Unbeliever says, "You are only a man!" "But I speak from God!" "Oh well! our ancestral ways of worship are good enough for us!" "What if they are wrong?" "What authority have you for saying so?" "The highest authority, that from God!" And so we come back full circle! Then the wicked rely on violence, but it recoils on them, and they perish.

To such of His servants  
As He pleases. It is not  
For us to bring you  
An authority except as God  
Permits. It is God on Whom  
All men of faith  
Put their trust.

12. "No reason have we why  
We should not put our trust  
On God. Indeed He  
Has guided us to the Ways  
We (follow). We shall certainly  
Bear with patience all  
The hurt you may cause us.  
For those who put their trust  
Should put their trust on God."

### SECTION 3.

13. **And** the Unbelievers said  
To their apostles: "Be sure  
We shall drive you out  
Of our land, or ye shall  
Return to our religion."<sup>1887</sup>  
But their Lord inspired  
(This Message) to them:  
"Verily We shall cause  
The wrong-doers to perish!

14. "And verily We shall  
Cause you to abide  
In the land, and succeed them.  
This for such as fear<sup>1888</sup>  
The Time when they shall stand  
Before My tribunal,—such  
As fear the Punishment  
denounced."

مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ  
وَمَا كَانَ لَنَا أَنْ نَأْتِيَكُمْ بِسُلْطَانٍ  
إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ  
وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ○  
۱۲- وَمَا لَنَا أَلَّا نَتَوَكَّلَ عَلَى اللَّهِ  
وَقَدْ هَدَانَا سُبُلَنَا  
وَلَنَصْبِرَنَّ عَلَى مَا آذَيْنَا  
وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُتَوَكِّلُونَ ۝

۱۳- وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِلرُّسُلِهِمْ  
لَنُخْرِجَنَّكُمْ مِنْ أَرْضِنَا  
أَوْ لَتَعُوذُنَّ فِي مِلْكِنَا  
فَأَوْحَى إِلَيْهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ لَنُهْلِكَنَّ  
الظَّالِمِينَ ۝

۱۴- وَلَنُسَكِّنَنَّكُمْ الْأَرْضَ  
مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ  
ذَٰلِكَ لِمَنْ خَافَ مَقَامِي  
وَخَافَ وَعِيدِ ○

1887. The arguments in a circle were explained in the last note. But Infidelity looks upon argument merely as an amusement. Its chief weapon is physical force. As its only belief is in materialism, it thinks that threats of force will put down the righteous. It offers the choice between exile and violence against conformity to its own standards of evil, which it thinks to be good. But Faith is not to be cowed down by Force. Its source of strength is God, and it receives the assurance that violence will perish ultimately by violence, and that Faith and Good must stand and be established. In fact the good must inherit the earth and the evil ones be blotted out.

1888. "Fear" means here "have present before their minds something which should cause them fear, so that they should shape their conduct in order to avoid the ill consequences of wickedness."



15. But they sought victory and  
decision<sup>1889</sup>  
(There and then), and frustration  
Was the lot of every  
Powerful obstinate transgressor.<sup>1890</sup>

١٥- وَاسْتَفْتَحُوا وَخَابَ  
كُلُّ جَبَّارٍ عَنِيدٍ ۝

16. In front of such a one  
Is Hell, and he is given,  
For drink, boiling fetid water.

١٦- مِنْ وَرَائِهِ جَهَنَّمُ وَيُسْقَى مِنْ مَاءٍ  
صَدِيدٍ ۝

17. In gulps will he sip it,  
But never will he be near  
Swallowing it down his throat:  
Death will come to him  
From every quarter, yet  
Will he not die: and  
In front of him will be  
A chastisement unrelenting.<sup>1891</sup>

١٧- يَجْعَلُهَا وَلَا يَكَادُ يُسِغُهَا  
وَيَأْتِيهِ الْمَوْتُ مِنْ كُلِّ مَكَانٍ  
وَمَا هُوَ بِمَيِّتٍ  
وَمِنْ وَرَائِهِ عَذَابٌ غَلِيظٌ ۝

18. The parable of those who  
Reject their Lord is that  
Their works are as ashes,<sup>1892</sup>  
On which the wind blows  
Furiously on a tempestuous day:  
No power have they over  
Aught that they have earned:  
That is the straying  
Far, far (from the goal).

١٨- مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِنَا هُمْ أَشْمَالُ  
كِرْمَادٍ  
اِسْتَدَّتْ بِهِ الرِّيحُ فِي يَوْمٍ عَاصِفٍ  
لَا يَقْدِرُونَ مِمَّا كَسَبُوا عَلَى شَيْءٍ  
ذَلِكَ هُوَ الصَّلُ الْبُعِيدُ ۝

1889. Cf. viii. 19. I have assumed that "they" in this verse is the same as "them" in the preceding verse, i.e., the ungodly. Hoping for victory they forced a decision, and they got it —against themselves. Or they challenged a punishment, and it came in good time. Some Commentators construe "they" here to mean "The apostles": in that case the verse would mean: "The Apostles prayed for a victory and decision, and the ungodly were frustrated in their efforts to suppress the Truth."

1890. Cf. xi. 59.

1891. A graphic and deterrent picture, from the preaching of the earlier Prophets, of unrelieved horror of the torments of Hell. The door of escape by annihilation is also closed to them.

1892. Note the fullness of the parable. The works of the ungodly are in themselves light and unsubstantial like ashes: they are the useless rubbish that remains out of the faculties and opportunities which they have misused by burning them up. Further, the ashes are blown about hither and thither by the wind: the ungodly have no compass, direction, or purpose that can stand. The wind, too, which blows on them is no ordinary wind, nor the day on which they seek to enjoy the fruits of their labours an ordinary tranquil day: a furious gale is blowing, for such is the Wrath of God. They have neither internal peace nor external gain. In the scattering of the ashes they lose control even of such things as they might have earned but for their misdeeds. Their whole nature is contaminated. All their wishes go astray. They are carried so far, far away from what was in their minds. What did they aim at, and what did they achieve?

19. Seest thou not that God  
Created the heavens and the earth  
In Truth? <sup>1893</sup> If He so will,  
He can remove you  
And put (in your place)  
A new Creation?

۝۱۰۰ أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ  
بِالْحَقِّ إِنَّ يَشَاءُ يُدْهِبُكُمْ  
وَيَأْتِي بِخَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ ۝

20. Nor is that for God  
Any great matter. <sup>1894</sup>

۝۱۰۱ وَمَا ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ بِعَزِيزٍ ۝

21. They will all be marshalled  
Before God together: then  
Will the weak say to those <sup>1895</sup>  
Who were arrogant, "For us,  
We but followed you; can ye  
Then avail us at all  
Against the Wrath of God?"  
They will reply, "If we  
Had received the guidance <sup>1896</sup>  
Of God, we should have  
Given it to you: to us  
It makes no difference (now)  
Whether we rage, or bear  
(These torments) with patience:  
For ourselves there is no way  
Of escape."

۝۱۰۲ وَبُرُودًا لِلَّهِ جَمِيعًا  
فَقَالَ الضَّعِيفُونَ الَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا  
إِنَّا لَكُنَّا لَكُمْ تَبَعًا  
فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُقْتُونَ عَنَّا مِنْ عَذَابِ  
اللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ۚ  
قَالُوا لَوْ هَدَانَا اللَّهُ لَهْدَيْنَاكُمْ  
سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْنَا أَجْرُنا أَمْ صَبْرُنَا  
مَا لَنَا مِنْ مَحْصِنٍ ۝

#### SECTION 4.

22. And Satan will say  
When the matter is decided: <sup>1897</sup>  
"It was God Who gave you  
A promise of Truth: I too  
Promised, but I failed  
In my promise to you.

۝۱۰۳ وَقَالَ الشَّيْطَانُ لَمَّا قُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ  
إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَعَدَكُمْ وَعْدَ الْحَقِّ  
وَوَعَدْتُكُمْ فَأَخْلَفْتُكُمْ

1893. *Haqq*: Truth, Right, Righteousness, True proportions, Reality. God's creation is not to be trifled with. It is built on righteousness, and those who do not obey its laws must give place to others who do. This warning is repeated again and again in history and in revelation. Cf. vi. 73.

1894. *'Aziz*: great, mighty, excellent, powerful, rare, precious.

1895. When the time for judgment comes, there are two kinds of disillusionment waiting for the ungodly. (1) Those who were misled and failed to see that each soul bears its own personal responsibility (ii. 134) and cannot shift it on to others, will turn to those who misled them, in the hope that they might intercede for them or do something to help them. They receive a plain answer as in the latter part of this verse. (2) Those who relied on Satan, the Power of Evil. His answer (in xiv. 22 below) is frank, cynical and brutal.

1896. Those whose power or specious influence or mislead them—such as false priests or leaders—will find themselves in a parlous state. How can they help others? They themselves failed to profit from God's guidance, and they can with some justice retort that they put them in the wrong path as they followed it themselves!

1897. After the Judgment, Evil declares itself in its true colours. Frankly it says: 'I deceived you. The promise of God was true, but you believed me rather than God. I had no power to force you. I had but to call you, and you came running after me. You must blame yourselves. Did you think I was equal with God? I know too well that I was not and never could be. If you did wrong, you must suffer the Penalty.'

I had no authority over you  
Except to call you, but ye  
Listened to me: then  
Reproach not me, but reproach  
Your own souls. I cannot listen  
To your cries, nor can ye  
Listen to mine. I reject<sup>1898</sup>  
Your former act in associating  
Me with God.  
For wrong-doers there must be  
A grievous Penalty."

23. But those who believe  
And work righteousness  
Will be admitted to Gardens  
Beneath which rivers flow,—  
To dwell therein for aye  
With the leave of their Lord.  
Their greeting therein  
Will be: "Peace!"<sup>1899</sup>

24. Seest thou not how  
God sets forth a parable?—  
A goodly Word<sup>1900</sup>  
Like a goodly tree,  
Whose root is firmly fixed,  
And its branches (reach)  
To the heavens,—

25. It brings forth its fruit<sup>1901</sup>  
At all times, by the leave

وَمَا كَانَ لِي عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ سُلْطَانٍ  
إِلَّا أَنْ دَعَوْتُكُمْ فَاسْتَجَبْتُمْ لِي  
فَلَا تَلُومُونِي وَلُومُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ  
مَا أَنَا بِمُصْرِخِكُمْ وَمَا أَنْتُمْ بِمُصْرِخِي  
إِنِّي كَفَرْتُ بِمَا أَشْرَكْتُمُونِ مِنْ قَبْلُ  
إِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ  
وَأَدْخَلَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ  
جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ  
خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ  
تَحِيَّتُهُمْ فِيهَا سَلَامٌ

۲۲- أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا  
كَلِمَةً طَيِّبَةً كَجَعَلَهُو طَيِّبَةً  
أَصْلُهَا ثَابِتٌ وَفَرْعُهَا فِي السَّمَاءِ

۲۵- تُؤْتِي أكلها كل حين بإذن

1898. See the last note. An alternative interpretation of this sentence may be: "I had already beforehand rebelled against God with Whom ye associated me."

1899. How this contrasts with the misery and the mutual self-recriminations of the ungodly!

1900. "Goodly word" is usually interpreted as the Divine Word, the Divine Message, the True Religion. It may also be interpreted in a more general sense as a word of truth, a word of goodness or kindness, which follows from a true appreciation of Religion. For Religion includes our duty to God and our duty to man. The "evil word" is opposite to this: false religion, blasphemy, false speech, or preaching or teaching unkindness and wrong-doing. The Word, in mystic language, is the root of the Deed, and is identified with the Deed.

1901. The goodly tree is known for: (1) its beauty; it gives pleasure to all who see it; (2) its stability; it remains firm and unshaken in storms, because its roots are firmly fixed in the earth; (3) its wide compass; its branches reach high, and it catches all the sunshine from heaven, and gives shade to countless birds in its branches and men and animals beneath it, and (4) its abundant fruit, which it yields at all times. So is the Good Word. It is as beautiful as it is true. It abides in all the changes and chances of this life, and even beyond (see verse 27 below); it is never shaken by sorrow or what seems to us calamity; its roots are deep down in the bed-rock facts of life. Its reach is universal, above, around, below: it is illuminated by the divine light from heaven, and its consolation reaches countless beings of all grades of life. Its fruit—the enjoyment of its blessings—is not confined to one season or one set of circumstances; furthermore the fortunate man who is the vehicle of that word has no self-pride; he attributes all its goodness, and his act in spreading it, to the Will and Leave of God. Cf. the New Testament Parable of the Sower (Matt. iv. 14-20) or of the Mustard seed (Matt. iv. 30-32). In this Parable of the Qur-ān there are fewer words and more spiritual meaning, and the emphasis is on more essential things.

Of its Lord.  
So God sets forth parables  
For men, in order that  
They may receive admonition.

رَبِّهَا وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ  
لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ

26. And the parable  
Of an evil Word  
Is that of an evil tree:  
It is torn up by the root  
From the surface of the earth:  
It has no stability.<sup>1902</sup>

وَمَثَلُ كَلِمَةٍ خَبِيثَةٍ كَشَجَرَةٍ خَبِيثَةٍ  
اجْتُثَّتْ مِنْ فَوْقِ الْأَرْضِ مَا لَهَا مِنْ  
قَرَارٍ

27. God will establish in strength  
Those who believe, with the Word  
That stands firm, in this world  
And in the Hereafter; but God  
Will leave, to stray, those  
Who do wrong: God doeth  
What He willeth.<sup>1903</sup>

يُثَبِّتُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِالْقَوْلِ  
الثَّابِتِ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ  
وَيُضِلُّ اللَّهُ الظَّالِمِينَ  
وَيَفْعَلُ اللَّهُ مَا يَشَاءُ

C. 118.—But the evil not only choose evil  
(xiv. 28-52) For themselves but mislead others  
To perdition. The godly should learn  
From the Signs of God all around them,  
And be on their guard against all  
That is false. So Abraham prayed  
Not only for his posterity, but for all:  
For he foresaw the universality  
Of God's Message in Islam.  
That leads to the mystic doctrine  
Of Oneness, which will be seen  
In its fulness on the Great Day  
When a new Earth and a new Heaven  
Will proclaim the end of Evil  
And the adjustment of all this life's accounts.

1902. The evil tree is the opposite of the goodly tree. The parallelism of contrast can be followed out in all the details of the last note.

1903. His Will and Plan may be above comprehension, but will prevail over all things. It is not like the will of man, who may plan good things but is not necessarily able to carry them out.

## SECTION 5.

28. **Has**st thou not turned  
Thy vision to those who<sup>1904</sup>  
Have changed the favour of God  
Into blasphemy and caused  
Their people to descend  
To the House of Perdition?—

29. Into Hell? They will burn  
Therein,—an evil place  
To stay in!

30. And they set up (idols)  
As equal to God, to mislead  
(Men) from the Path! Say:  
"Enjoy (your brief power)!  
But verily ye are making  
Straightway for Hell!"

31. **Speak** to my servants  
Who have believed,<sup>1905</sup>  
That they may establish  
Regular prayers, and spend  
(In charity) out of the  
Sustenance<sup>1906</sup>

٢٨- أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ  
بَدَّلُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ كُفْرًا  
وَأَحْلَوْا قَوْمَهُمْ دَارَ الْبَوَارِ

٢٩- جَحَنَّمَ يَصْلَوْنَهَا  
وَيَبْسُ الْقَرَارِ

٣٠- وَجَعَلُوا لِلَّهِ أَنْدَادًا لِيُضِلُّوا  
عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ قُلْ تَمَتَّعُوا  
فَإِنَّ مَصِيرَكُمْ إِلَى النَّارِ

٣١- قُلْ لِعِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا  
يُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَيُنْفِقُوا مِمَّا

1904. There is a particular and a general meaning. The particular meaning is understood to be a reference to the Meccan Pagans who turned the House of God into a place for the worship of horrible idols and the practice of unseemly rites and cults. There is no real difficulty in accepting this as part of a late Meccan Sūra even without supposing it to be a prophecy. The Meccan Pagans had turned Religion into a blasphemous superstition, and were misguiding their people, persecuting the true Messenger of God and all who followed his teaching. Their cup of iniquity seemed about full, and they seemed to be heading to perdition, as later events indeed showed to be the case.

The general meaning is also clear. Selfish men, when they seize power, want worship for themselves or their Phantasies, in derogation of the true God. Power, which should have been an instrument of good, becomes in their hands an instrument of evil. They and their people rush headlong to perdition. "These be thy gods, oh Israel!" has been a cry repeated again and again in history, in the face, or at the back, of men of God!

1905. Putting ourselves back in the position in which the Muslim community found themselves in Mecca just before the Hijra, we can imagine how much encouragement and consolation they were deprived of the means of livelihood on account of their Faith, and the steadfast character of Muḥammad. Intolerant persecution was the order of the day; neither the life nor the property or reputation of the Muslims was safe. They are asked to find strength and tranquillity in prayer and in helping each other according to their needs and resources.

1906. Here, as elsewhere, "Sustenance" is to be taken in the literal as well as the metaphorical sense. There were many among the Muslims who were poor, or slaves, or depressed, because they were deprived of the means of livelihood on account of their Faith. They were to be fed, clothed, and sheltered, by those who had means. There were those who were ignorant and needed spiritual sustenance: they were to be taught and strengthened by those to whom God had given knowledge and firmness of character. Charity was to be ordinarily secret, so as to cut out all show or parade, and perhaps also lest the enemy should dry up those sources by unprincipled violence; but there must be much that had to be open and organised, so that all the needy could know where to go to be relieved.

We have given them,  
Secretly and openly, before  
The coming of a Day  
In which there will be  
Neither mutual bargaining<sup>1907</sup>  
Nor befriending.

رَزَقْنَاهُمْ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً  
مِّن قَبْلِ أَن يَأْتِيَ يَوْمٌ  
لَّا بَيْعُ فِيهِ وَلَا خُلَّةٌ ۝

32. It is God Who hath created  
The heavens and the earth  
And sendeth down rain  
From the skies, and with it  
Bringeth out fruits wherewith  
To feed you; it is He  
Who hath made the ships subject  
To you, that they may sail  
Through the sea by His Command;  
And the rivers (also)  
Hath He made subject to you.<sup>1908</sup>

۝۲۲ اَللّٰهُ الَّذِیْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ  
وَاَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَآءً  
فَاَخْرَجَ بِهِ مِنَ الثَّمَرٰتِ رِزْقًا لَّكُمْ  
وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الْفَلَکَ  
لَتَجْرِيْ فِی الْبَحْرِ بِاَمْرِهِ  
وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الْاَنْهَارَ ۝

33. And He hath made subject  
To you the sun and the moon,<sup>1909</sup>  
Both diligently pursuing  
Their courses; and the Night  
And the Day hath He (also)  
Made subject to you.

۝۳۳ وَ سَخَّرَ لَكُمُ  
الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ دَآئِبَيْنِ  
وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الْاَيُّلَ وَالنَّهَارَ ۝

1907. The great Day of Reckoning would be one on which all values would be changed. Wealth, as understood in this world, would no longer count. Should we not therefore use any wealth we have in this life, to give here and receive there? *Bar'* includes all bargaining,—barter, purchase and sale, etc. In this world, where wealth has some value, let us spend it and get for ourselves "treasures in heaven". In the next life each man will stand on his merits and personal responsibility. One man cannot help another. Let us here help each other to become true and righteous, so that our personal account may be favourable there.

1908. We must realise that behind all our strength, skill, and intelligence there is the power and goodness of God, Who gave us all these things. Man can understand and control the forces of nature so as to bring them to his own service: he can only do so, because (1) he has got these gifts from God, and (2) God has fixed definite laws in nature, of which he can take advantage by God's command and permission. He has been made Vicegerent on earth (ii. 30): God commanded the highest creatures to bow down to Adam (ii. 34). Man, by God's command, can use rain to produce food for himself; make ships to sail the seas; use rivers as highways, and cut canals for traffic and irrigation. Not only this, but even the heavenly bodies can (by God's command) contribute to his needs (see next verse).

1909. The sun gives out heat, which is the source of all life and energy on this planet, and produces the seasons of the year, by utilising which man can supply his needs, not only material, but immaterial in the shape of light, health, and other blessings. The sun and the moon together produce tides, and are responsible for atmospheric changes which are of the highest importance in the life of man. The succession of Day and Night is due to the apparent daily course of the sun through the skies; and the cool light of the moon performs other services different from those of warm day-light. Because there are laws here, which man can understand and calculate, he can use all such things for his own service, and in that sense the heavenly bodies are themselves made subject to him by God's command.

- 34 And He giveth you  
Of all that ye ask for.<sup>1910</sup>  
But if ye count the favours  
Of God, never will ye  
Be able to number them.  
Verily, man is given up  
To injustice and ingratitude.<sup>1911</sup>

## SECTION 6.

35. Remember Abraham said:<sup>1912</sup>  
"Oh my Lord! make this city  
One of peace and security:  
And preserve me and my sons  
From worshipping idols."<sup>1913</sup>

36. "Oh my Lord! they have indeed  
Led astray many among mankind;  
He then who follows my (ways)  
Is of me, and he that  
Disobeys me,—but Thou  
Art indeed Oft-Forgiving,  
Most Merciful.

37. "Oh our Lord! I have made  
Some of my offspring to dwell  
In a valley without cultivation,<sup>1914</sup>  
By Thy Sacred House;

۳۴- وَأَنْتُمْ مِنْ كُلِّ مَا سَأَلْتُمُوهُ  
وَإِنْ تَعَدُّوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ لَا تَحْصُوهَا  
إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَقَلُومٌ كَفَّارٌ ۝

۳۵- وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هَذَا  
الْبَلَدَ آمِنًا وَاجْنُبْنِي  
وَبَنِيَّ أَنْ نَعْبُدَ الْأَصْنَامَ ۝

۳۶- رَبِّ إِنَّهُمْ أَضَلَكُنْ كَثِيرًا مِنْ  
التَّائِبِينَ فَكُنْ تَبِعَنِي فَإِنَّهُ يَتَّبِعُنِي  
وَمَنْ عَصَانِي  
فَإِنَّكَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ۝

۳۷- رَبَّنَا إِنِّي أَتَّكَلْتُ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي  
بِوَادٍ غَيْرِ ذِي زَرْعٍ عِنْدَ بَيْتِكَ الْمُحَرَّمِ

1910. Sincere and true prayer in faith is answered by God. Thus He gives us everything which a wise and benevolent Providence can give.

1911. I have tried to render the intensive forms of the Arabic by what I consider their near equivalents here: the phrase "given up to injustice and ingratitude" suggests habitual ignoring of just values and ingratitude for the innumerable gifts and favours which God has showered on mankind.

1912. This Prayer of Abraham, the True in Faith, the progenitor of the Semitic peoples and the Prototype of their Religion, is introduced in this place, to illustrate the points referred to in the preceding section, xiv. 31-34, viz., how the new Revelation through the Ka'ba bears out the universal Revelation of Prayer and Charity, Love of God and man, Recognition of God's handiwork in nature, and Insistence on man's turning away from false worship and ingratitude to God. Notice the four divisions into which it falls: (1) verses 35-36 are spoken by Abraham as on his own behalf ("oh my Lord!"); (2) verses 37-38 are spoken on behalf of his progeny ("oh our Lord!") but with special reference to the elder branch, the children of Ismā'il; (3) verses 39-40 are again a personal appeal, but both branches of his family, viz., the sons of Ismā'il and Isaac, are expressly mentioned; (4) verse 41 is a Prayer for himself, his parents, and all Believers, typifying that in the universality of Islam all nations are to be blessed. Jerusalem, for the Mosaic Law and the Gospel of Jesus, was the centre and symbol for the Jewish race, though of course all God's Truth is universal; Mecca, the centre of the Arab race, was to throw off its tribal character and become universal, in spite of the Meccans themselves.

1913. Cf. ii. 125-129. Abraham (with Ismā'il) built the Ka'ba, and Abraham asks a blessing on his handiwork and forgiveness for such lapses into idolatry as both branches of his family might fall into.

1914. The Meccan valley is enclosed by hills on all sides, unlike Medina, which has level cultivated plains. But just because of its natural isolation, it is fitted to be a centre for Prayer and Praise.

In order, oh our Lord, that they  
May establish regular Prayer:  
So fill the hearts of some  
Among men with love towards  
And feed them with Fruits: <sup>them,</sup>  
So that they may give thanks. <sup>1915</sup>

38. "Oh our Lord! truly Thou  
Dost know what we conceal  
And what we reveal:  
For nothing whatever is hidden  
From God, whether on earth  
Or in heaven. <sup>1916</sup>
39. "Praise be to God, Who hath  
Granted unto me in old age  
Ismā'il and Isaac: for truly  
My Lord is He, the Hearer  
Of Prayer! <sup>1917</sup>
40. "Oh my Lord! make me  
One who establishes regular Prayer,  
And also (raise such)  
Among my offspring, <sup>1918</sup>  
Oh our Lord!  
And accept Thou my Prayer.
41. "Oh our Lord! <sup>1919</sup> cover (us) <sup>1920</sup>  
With Thy Forgiveness—me,

رَبَّنَا لِيُعِيْمُوا الصَّلَاةَ  
فَاَجْعَلْ اَفْئِدَةً مِّنَ النَّاسِ تَهْوِي  
اِلَيْهِمْ  
وَاجْعَلْهُمْ مِّنَ الشُّعْرَبِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَشْكُرُونَ  
٣٨- رَبَّنَا اِنَّكَ تَعْلَمُ مَا نُخْفِي  
وَمَا نُعْلِنُ وَمَا يَخْفَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ  
فِي الْاَرْضِ وَلَا فِي السَّمَاءِ  
٣٩- الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي وَهَبَ لِي عَلَى الْكِبَرِ  
اِسْمَاعِيلَ وَاسْحَقَ  
اِنَّ رَبِّي لَسَمِيعٌ دَلِيلٌ  
٤٠- رَبِّ اجْعَلْنِي مُقِيمَ الصَّلَاةِ  
وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي  
رَبَّنَا وَتَقَبَّلْ دُعَاءِ  
٤١- رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لِي

1915. Cf ii. 126, and n. 128. (The "Fruits" are there explained.) The righteous, though they have to have sustenance, both in a literal and figurative sense, require also the love and sympathy of their fellow-men.

1916. In Abraham's prophetic mind was the secret and open enmity or contempt which the Children of Israel were to have for the Children of Ismā'il (Arabs). He prays to God that they may be united in Islam, as indeed they were, except a small remnant.

1917. Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was born (Gen. xxi. 5; and as Ismā'il was 13 years old when Abraham was 99, (Gen. xvii. 24-25), Ismā'il was also a son of his father's old age, having been born when Abraham was 86 years old. The younger son's progeny developed the Faith of Israel and that of Christ; the elder son's progeny perfected the more universal Faith of Islam, the Faith of Abraham the True.

1918. Abraham prays for both branches of his family, having a wider vision than some of the later Children of Israel.

1919. Read again n. 1912 above. Having prayed for his progeny, Abraham now prays for God's grace on himself, his parents, and the whole Brotherhood of Faith, irrespective of family or race or time, to be perfected in the ideal of Islam.

1920. For the shades of meaning in the different words for Forgiveness, see n. 110 to ii. 109.



My parents,<sup>1921</sup> and (all) Believers,  
On the Day that the Reckoning  
Will be established ! " <sup>1922</sup>

وَلِوَالِدَيْ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَوْمَ يَقُومُ  
الْحِسَابُ ۝

## SECTION 7.

42. Think not that God  
Doth not heed the deeds  
Of those who do wrong.  
He but giveth them respite  
Against a Day when  
The eyes will fixedly stare  
In horror,—

۞ وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ اللَّهَ غَافِلًا  
عَمَّا يَعْمَلُ الظَّالِمُونَ ؕ  
إِنَّمَا يُؤَخِّرُهُمْ لِيَوْمٍ  
تَشْخَصُ فِيهِ الْأَبْصَارُ ۝

43. They running forward  
With necks outstretched,  
Their heads uplifted, their gaze  
Returning not towards them,  
And their hearts a (gaping)  
void ! <sup>1923</sup>

۞ مُهْطِعِينَ مُقْنِبِينَ رُءُوسِهِمْ  
لَا يَرْجِعُونَ إِلَيْهِمْ طَرَفُهُمْ  
وَآفِدَتْ لَهُمْ أَعْيُنُ ۝

44. So warn mankind  
Of the Day when the Wrath  
Will reach them : then will  
The wrong-doers say : " Our  
Lord !

Respite us (if only)  
For a short Term : we will  
Answer Thy Call, and follow  
The apostles ! "  
" What ! were ye not wont  
To swear aforetime that ye  
Should suffer no decline ? <sup>1924</sup>

۞ وَأَنْذِرِ النَّاسَ يَوْمَ يَأْتِيهِمُ الْعَذَابُ  
فَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا رَبَّنَا  
اجْعَلْ لَنَا آجَلًا قَرِيبًا  
نُحِبُّ دَعْوَتَكَ وَنَتَّبِعُ الرُّسُلَ  
أَوْ لَمْ نَكُونُوا أَقْسَمْتُمْ مِنْ قَبْلُ  
مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ زُلَالٍ ۝

1921. My parents. Abraham's father was an idolater (xliii. 26 ; vi. 74). Not only that, but he persecuted the Faith of Unity and threatened Abraham with stoning and exile (xix. 46) ; and he and his people cast him into the Fire to be burned (xxi. 52, 68). Yet Abraham's heart was tender, and he prayed for forgiveness for his father because of a promise which he had made (ix. 114), though he renounced the land of his fathers (Chaldea).

1922. At the final Reckoning, all that may seem inequality or injustice in this world will be redressed. But the merits of the best of us will need God's Grace to establish us in that lasting Felicity which is promised to the righteous. And Abraham, as the father of Prophecy, prayed for all,—for the Universal Faith perfected in Islam.

1923. A picture of horror. The evil ones, when they realise the situation, will be dazed : their eyes will stare without expression, and never move back ; their necks will be outstretched ; their heads uplifted in terror of the Judgment from on High ; and their hearts become empty of all hope or intelligence as the physical heart might become empty of blood when the circulation stops. In this state they will press forward to Judgment.

1924. *Zawāl*—decline from the Zenith, as that of the sun ; decline from the highest point reached by a heavenly body in its course through the sky. The ungodly are apt to think that their power will remain in the ascendant, on account of some material advantages given them temporarily by God, but they are constantly receiving warnings in history and revelation and from the example of others before them. There is a warning to the contemporary Pagan Meccans here ; but the warning is perfectly general, and for all time.

45. "And ye dwelt in the dwellings  
Of men who wronged their own  
Souls; ye were clearly shown  
How We dealt with them;  
And We put forth (many) Parables  
In your behoof!"
46. Mighty indeed were the plots  
Which they made, but their plots  
Were (well) within the sight  
Of God, even though they were  
Such as to shake the hills!
47. Never think that God would fail  
His apostles in His promise:  
For God is Exalted in Power,—  
The Lord of Retribution.
48. One day the Earth will be  
Changed to a different Earth,  
And so will be the Heavens,<sup>1925</sup>  
And (men) will be marshalled  
Forth, before God, the One,  
The Irresistible;
49. And thou wilt see  
The Sinners that day  
Bound together in fetters;—<sup>1926</sup>
50. Their garments<sup>1927</sup> of liquid  
pitch,<sup>1928</sup>  
And their faces covered with Fire;
- ٣٥- وَ سَكَنتُمْ فِي مَسْكِينَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا  
أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَ تَبَيَّنَ لَكُمْ كَيْفَ فَعَلْنَا بِهِمْ  
وَ ضَرْبَا لَكُمْ الْأَمْثَالِ ۝
- ٣٦- وَقَدْ مَكَرُوا مَكْرَهُمْ وَعِنْدَ اللَّهِ  
مَكْرُهُمْ وَإِنْ كَانَ مَكْرُهُمْ  
لَيُزُولُ مِنْهُ الْجِبَالُ ۝
- ٣٧- فَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ اللَّهَ مُخَلِّفَ وَعْدِهِ  
رُسُلَهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ ذُو انْتِقَامٍ ۝
- ٣٨- يَوْمَ تُبَدَّلُ الْأَرْضُ غَيْرَ الْأَرْضِ  
وَ السَّمَوَاتُ وَ يُرْزَقُ لِلَّهِ  
الْوَاحِدِ الْقَهَّارِ ۝
- ٣٩- وَ تَرَى الْمُجْرِمِينَ يَوْمَئِذٍ  
مُقْتَرَنِينَ فِي الْأَصْفَادِ ۝
- ٤٠- سَرَابِيلُهُمْ مِنْ قَطَرَانٍ  
وَ تَغْشَى وُجُوهَهُمُ النَّارُ ۝

1925. "A new earth and a new heaven" refers to (1) the entirely changed conditions at the end of things as we know them, so that we can only have the new world described to us by symbols and metaphors as in the following verses; and (2) to the spiritual world of changing values even as time goes on, so that the judgment on man begins gradually to take effect even while in externals he is in the phenomenal world, for in his inner being he is experiencing the effects, good or evil, of his conduct on earth. In the latter case, also, his mystic experience can only be described in symbols.

1926. The *fetters* will be their evil actions, thoughts, and motives, which they cannot shake off, as they could have shaken them off by repentance and amendment while there was yet time and opportunity to do so.

1927. *Sirbāl*: plural, *Sarābil*: a garment or coat of mail, breast-plate; something covering the most vital parts of the body, like the shirt or the Indian *kuriā*.

1928. *Qaṣīrān*: black pitch, a resinous substance exuding from certain kinds of trees like the terebinth or the pines, or distilled from wood or coal. It catches fire readily. Issuing from the upper garments (*Sarābil*) the flames soon cover the face, the most expressive part of man's essence or being. The metaphor of fetters (n. 1926) is now changed to that of pitch, which darkens and sets on fire the soul of man.

51. That God may requite  
Each soul according  
To its deserts; <sup>1929</sup>  
And verily God is Swift  
In calling to account. <sup>1930</sup>

أه- لِيَجْزِيَ اللَّهُ كُلَّ نَفْسٍ مَا كَسَبَتْ  
إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ ○

52. There is a Message for mankind:  
Let them take warning therefrom,  
And let them know that He  
Is (no other than) One God: <sup>1931</sup>  
Let men of understanding  
Take heed.

هـ- هَذَا بَلَاءٌ لِلنَّاسِ وَلِيُنذَرُوا بِهِ  
وَلِيَعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا هُوَ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ  
وَلِيُنذَرُ كَرُّ أُولَ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ ٥٢



1929. *Its deserts: i.e., according to what it earned by its own acts, good or evil, in its life of probation.*

1930. *Swift in calling to account:* We can understand this in two significations. (1) Let not the wicked think that because God, out of His infinite grace and mercy, grants respite, therefore the retribution will be slow in coming. When the time comes in accordance with God's Plan and Wisdom, the retribution will come so swiftly that the ungodly will be surprised and they will wish they could get more respite (xiv. 44). (2) On the great Day of Reckoning, let it not be supposed that, because there will be millions of souls to be judged, there will be any delay in judgment as in a human tribunal. It will be a new world and beyond the flight of Time. Or if a metaphor from time as we conceive it in this world can be taken, it will all be as it were in the twinkling of an eye.

1931. Here is another aspect of the Truth of Unity. God being One, all justice is of one standard, for Truth is one, and we see it as one as soon as the scales of phenomenal diversity fall from our eyes. The one true Reality then emerges. Blessed are those who treasured this Truth in their souls already in their life of probation.

INTRODUCTION TO SŪRA XV (*Hijr*)

This is the last of the six Sūras of the A. L. M. series (x. to xv.). Its place in chronology is the late Meccan period, probably somewhere near the middle of that period. See Introduction to S. x., where will be found also an indication of the general subject-matter of the whole series in the gradation of Quranic teaching.

The special subject-matter of this Sūra is the protection of God's Revelation and God's Truth. Evil arose from Pride and the warping of man's will, but God's Mercy is the antidote, as was proved in the case of Abraham and Lot, and might have been proved by the people of the Aika and the Hijr if they had only attended to God's "Signs". The Qur-ān, beginning with the Seven Oft-repeated Verses, is the precious vehicle for the praises of God.

*Summary.*

God will guard His Revelation, in spite of the cavils of the Unbelievers; God is the source of all things; He knows His own people, whom He will gather to Himself (xv. 1-25, and C. 119).

How Evil arose through the pride of Iblis, to whom a respite was granted for a period; but neither fear nor evil will affect those who receive God's Message. (xv. 26-50, and C. 120).

The Mercy of God to Abraham was conveyed by the same messenger that were sent to destroy the people of Lot for their unspeakable crimes; Evil brought its retribution also on the Companions of the Wood (*Aika*) and of the Rocky Tract (*Hijr*) (xv. 51-84, and C. 121).

The Qur-ān and its Sūras teach you to celebrate God's praises, learn humility in worship, and serve God all your life (xv. 85-99, and C. 122).

## Sūra XV.

*Al-Hijr, or The Rocky Tract.**In the name of God, Most Gracious,  
Most Merciful.*

1. **A. L. M.** <sup>1982</sup> These are  
The **Āyats** <sup>1988</sup> of Revelation,—  
13 Of a Qur-ān  
30 That makes things clear. <sup>1984</sup>



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي الْقُرْآنِ  
وَقُرْآنٍ مُبِينٍ ۝

C. 119.—God's Truth makes all things clear, and He  
(xv. 1-25.) Will guard it. But His Signs are not  
For those who mock. Who fails to see  
The majesty, beauty, order, and harmony  
Blazoned in His Creation, and His goodness  
To all His creatures, in the heavens  
And on earth? With Him are the sources  
Of all things, and He doth freely give  
His gifts in due measure. He holds  
The keys of Life and Death, and He will remain  
When all else passes away.

1932. For these mystic letters, see Introduction to Sūra x.

1933. Cf. x. 1, and n. 1382.

1934. Note how appropriately the different phrases in which the Qur-ān is characterised, bring out its different aspects as a Revelation. Let us just consider the phrases used at the beginning of the six A. L. M. Sūras, of which this is the last in order of arrangement. In x. 1 we read, "Āyats (or verses or Signs) of the Book of Wisdom", the theme being the wonders of God's Creation, and its relation to His Revelation. In xi. 1 we read, "a Book, with verses basic or fundamental, further explained in detail": the theme is God's Justice and punishment, to preserve the fundamental scheme of His Laws. In xii. 1 we read, "The Symbols (or verses) of the Perspicuous Book": the wonderful unfolding of God's Plan is explained in Joseph's story. In xiii. 1 we read, "The Signs (or verses) of the Book": the contrasts in the modes of God's Revelation and its reception by man are pointed out, but not illustrated by detailed examples as in Joseph's perspicuous story. In xiv. 1 we read, "A Book.....revealed.....to lead.....out of.....darkness into light": the theme being Abraham's prayer for man to be rescued from the darkness of false worship into the light of Unity. Here, in xv. 1 we read, "Āyats (or verses) of Revelation,—of a Qur-ān that makes things clear (or perspicuous)": the theme being an explanation of evil, and how God's Truth is protected from it.

2. ~~Again~~ and again will those  
Who disbelieve, wish that they  
Had bowed (to God's Will)  
In Islām.<sup>1935</sup>

۲- رَبُّمَا يُوَدُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا  
لَوْ كَانُوا مُسْلِمِينَ ○

3. Leave them alone, to enjoy<sup>1936</sup>  
(The good things of this life)  
And to please themselves:  
Let (false) Hope amuse them : soon  
Will knowledge (undeceive them).<sup>1937</sup>

۳- ذَرَّهُمْ يَأْكُلُوا وَيَشْتَبِهُوا  
وَلِيْلَهُمُ الْأَمَلُ فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ ○

4. ~~Never~~ did We destroy  
A population that had not  
A term decreed and assigned  
Beforehand.<sup>1938</sup>

۴- وَمَا أَهْلَكْنَاهُمْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ إِلَّا  
وَلَهَا كِتَابٌ مَعْلُومٌ ○

5. Neither can a people anticipate  
Its Term, nor delay it.<sup>1939</sup>

۵- مَا تَسْبِقُ مِنْ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلَهَا وَمَا يَسْتَأْخِرُونَ ○

6. They say : " O thou to whom  
The Message is being revealed !  
Truly thou art mad  
(or possessed) !<sup>1940</sup>

۶- وَقَالُوا يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِي نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ الذِّكْرُ  
إِنَّكَ لَسَجُونٌ ○

1935. The time must inevitably come when those who allow themselves to be deceived by falsehood or deliberately break God's Law will find themselves in a terrible plight. They will then wish, ardently and again and again, that they had sought God's Will and walked in the light of Truth. That time may be early or late,—in this life, or at death, or at the Day of Judgment, but it must come. Man's own highest interest requires that he should awake to the Reality before it is too late for repentance.

1936. Literally, "to eat". Cf. v. 69 and n. 776.

1937. The foolish and the wicked set great store by the pleasures of this world. In their pride they think they have all knowledge. In the fulness of knowledge they will see how wrong they were. Meanwhile those who have received the Light should not for a single moment wonder at the apparent prosperity of the ungodly in this world. They should leave them alone, confident in the goodness and justice of God.

1938. *Kiābun ma'lām* literally, "a writing known". There are many shades of meaning implied. (1) For every people, as for every individual, there is a definite Term assigned: their faculty of choice gives them the opportunity of moulding their will according to God's Will, and thus identifying themselves with God's Universal Law. During that Term they will be given plenty of rope: after that Term is past, there will be no opportunity for repentance. (2) Neither the righteous nor the ungodly can hasten or delay the doom: God's Will must prevail, and He is All-Wise. (3) The destruction of a people is not an arbitrary punishment from God: the people bring it on themselves by their own choice; for the fixed Law or Decree of God is always made known to them beforehand, and in many ways.

1939. Cf. vii. 34. Also see the last note.

1940. *Muṣṭafā* was accused by the ungodly of being mad or possessed, because he spoke of higher things than they knew, and acted from motives purer and nobler than they could understand. So, in a minor degree, is the lot of all the righteous in the presence of an ungodly world. Their motives, actions, words, hopes, and aspirations are unintelligible to their fellows, and they are accused of being mad or out of their senses. But they know that they are on the right path, and it is the ungodly who are really acting against their own best interests.

7. "Why bringest thou not  
Angels to us if it be  
That thou hast the Truth?" <sup>1941</sup>
8. We send not the angels  
Down except for just cause: <sup>1942</sup>  
If they came (to the ungodly),  
Behold! no respite would they  
have! <sup>1943</sup>
9. ~~We~~ We have, without doubt,  
Sent down the Message;  
And We will assuredly  
Guard it (from corruption). <sup>1944</sup>
10. ~~We~~ We did send apostles before thee  
Amongst the religious sects <sup>1945</sup>  
Of old:
11. But never came an apostle  
To them but they mocked him.
12. Even so do we let it creep  
Into the hearts of the sinners— <sup>1946</sup>
13. That they should not believe  
In the (Message); but the ways

لَوْ مَا تَأْتِينَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ  
إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ ۝  
مَا نُنَزِّلُ الْمَلَائِكَةَ اِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ  
وَمَا كَانُوْا اِذَا مُنْظَرِيْنَ ۝  
وَإِنَّا لَنَحْنُ نُنَزِّلُ الْكِتٰبَ  
وَرٰقًا لَّهٗ لَاحِفُوْنَ ۝  
۱- وَلَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ فِيْ رِسَالَةٍ  
الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ۝  
۲- وَمَا يَأْتِيهِمْ مِنْ رُّسُوْلٍ اِلَّا كَانُوْا بِهِ  
يَسْتَهْزِءُوْنَ ۝  
۳- كَذٰلِكَ نَسْلُكُهُ فِيْ قُلُوْبِ الْغٰفِرِيْنَ ۝  
۴- لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِهِ وَقَدْ

1941. Cf. vi. 8-9, and notes 840, 811. On the part of the unbelievers, this is a mere taunt. They neither believe in God nor in angels nor in revelation nor in any but material things. It is ridiculous to suppose that they could be taken seriously.

1942. Angels are not sent down to satisfy the whim or curiosity of the unbelievers. They are sent to bring inspiration to God's messengers and to execute God's decrees.

1943. If the angels were to appear before the ungodly, it would mean that they came to execute just punishment, and then there would be no hope of respite possible for the ungodly.

1944. The purity of the text of the Qur-ān through thirteen centuries and a half is a foretaste of the eternal care with which God's Truth is guarded through all ages. All corruptions, inventions, and accretions pass away, but God's pure and holy Truth will never suffer eclipse even though the whole world mocked at it and were bent on destroying it.

1945. *Shi'ya'un*, plural of *Shi'atun*—a sect, a religious division. Mankind sees fragments of Truth at a time, and is apt to fall into fragments and divisions. All true apostles of God come to reconcile these fragments or divisions, for they preach the true Gospel of Unity. So came Muṣṭafā to bring back to Unity the many jarring sects among the Jews, Christians, and Pagans. His mission was held up to ridicule, but so was the mission of his predecessors. Mockery itself should not discourage the preachers of Truth.

1946. If evil and disbelief exist in the world, we must not be impatient or lose our own faith. We must recognise that if such things are permitted, they are part of the Universal Plan and Purpose of God, Who is All-Wise and All-Good, but Whose wisdom and goodness we cannot fully fathom. One consolation we have, and that is stated in the next verse and the next note.





From every evil spirit  
accursed:<sup>1952</sup>

18. But ahy that gains a hearing<sup>1953</sup>  
By stealth, is pursued  
By a flaming fire, bright  
(to see).<sup>1954</sup>

19. And the earth We have  
spread out<sup>1955</sup>  
(Like a carpet); set thereon  
Mountains firm and immovable;  
And produced therein all kinds  
Of things in due balance.<sup>1956</sup>

20. And We have provided therein  
Means of subsistence,—for you  
And for those for whose  
sustenance<sup>1957</sup>  
Ye are not responsible.

21. And there is not a thing  
But its (sources and) treasures<sup>1958</sup>

مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْطَانٍ رَجِيمٍ ۝

۱۸-لَا مَنِ السُّرُوقِ السُّعْمَ  
فَاتَّبَعَهُ شِهَابٌ مُبِينٌ ۝

۱۹-وَالْأَرْضَ مَدَدْنَاهَا  
وَالْقَيْنَا فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ  
وَأَنْبَتْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مَوْزُونٍ ۝

۲۰-وَجَعَلْنَا الْكُفْرَ فِيهَا مَعَايِشَ  
وَمَنْ لِنُسْتَمِرَّ لَهُ بِرَبِّهِ قَيْنٍ ۝

۲۱-وَلَنْ يَمُنَ شَيْءٌ إِلَّا عِنْدَ تَاخَّرِ آيَةٍ ۝

1952. *Rajīm* : driven away with stones, rejected, accursed. Cf. iii. 36.

1953. Spiritually speaking, order, beauty, and harmony, light, and truth are repugnant to evil. It deliberately rejects them when offered freely as God's gifts. But its crooked nature loves to gain access by fraud or stealth. Its malevolent curiosity impels it to gain by stealth a sound of that harmony of which it is itself a negation. And its punishment is a flashing light, in itself most uncongenial to the powers of darkness, which are a negation of light. Notice that in the allegory the objective of Evil was to steal a hearing of Music: its punishment is therefore different—a flaming light which it did not seek. For both celestial harmony and celestial light are repugnant to the spirit of evil.

1954. A shooting star appears to be meant. Cf. xxxvii. 10.

1955. Majesty, order, beauty, and harmony are shown in all God's Creation, but especially in the heavens. Coming nearer to man, God's care for man and His goodness are shown (besides His other qualities) in His creation of the earth. In highly poetical language, the earth is described as spread out like a carpet, on which the eternal hills act as weights to keep it steady.

1956. And every kind of thing is produced on the earth in due balance and measure. The mineral kingdom supports the vegetable, and they in their turn support the animal, and there is a link of mutual dependence between them. Excess is eliminated. The waste of one is made the food of another, and *vice versa*. And this in an infinite chain of gradation and inter-dependence.

1957. See last note. 'We provide sustenance of every kind, physical, mental, spiritual, etc. for you, (i.e., for mankind). But We do more. We provide for every one of Our creatures. And there are those of which mankind is not even cognisant. We provide for them also. There are those who may at first sight appear hostile to man, or whom man may consider hostile, such as wild and noxious animals. They are Our creatures, and We provide for them also, as they are Our creatures. But there is due order and balance in the economy of Our universal Plan.'

1958. *Khasā'in*: treasures; store-houses; places where valuable things are accumulated, from which supplies are distributed from time to time as need arises.

(Inexhaustible) are with Us;  
But We only send down  
Thereof in due and ascertainable  
measures.<sup>1959</sup>

وَمَا يَزِيلُهُ  
إِلَّا بِقَدَرٍ مَّعْلُومٍ ۝

22. And We send the fecundating<sup>1960</sup>  
winds,  
Then cause the rain to descend  
From the sky, therewith  
providing  
You with water (in abundance),  
Though ye are not the  
guardians<sup>1961</sup>  
Of its stores.<sup>1962</sup>

۲۲- وَأَرْسَلْنَا الرِّيحَ لَوَاقِحَ  
فَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً  
فَأَنْشَقْبُنْكُمْ مَعَهُ  
وَمَا أَنْتُمْ لَهُ بِخَازِنِينَ ۝

23. And verily, it is We  
Who give Life, and Who give<sup>1963</sup>  
Death: it is We Who remain  
Inheritors<sup>1964</sup>  
(After all else passes away).

۲۳- وَإِنَّا لَنَحْنُ فَحْيُ  
وَنُفُوتٌ  
وَنَحْنُ الْوَارِثُونَ ۝

1959. All the wonderful gifts and forces and energies which we see in the world around us have their sources and fountain-heads with God, the Creator and Sustainer of the Worlds. And what we see or perceive or imagine is just a small portion of what exists. That portion is sent out to us and to our world according to our needs or its needs from time to time as the occasion arises. It is strictly limited according to rule and plan. Its source is unlimited and inexhaustible. In the same way the forces which we see operating around us, in nature or in the spiritual world, according to laws which we can grasp and ascertain, are mere derived forces, in the 2nd, 3rd, or nth degree. Their source and ultimate fountain-head is with God.

1960. *Lawāiqib*, plural of *lāqib*, from *laqaḥa*, to impregnate or fecundate the female date-palm by putting the pollen of the male tree on to the ovaries of the female tree. The date-palm is uni-sexual. The wind performs this office for many flowers. Here, by a bold metaphor, its fecundating quality is transferred to the clouds, which by means of rain produce all kinds of fruit, grain, and vegetation. The clouds as vapour are manipulated by the winds, which set up atmospheric currents resulting in condensation and the descent of rain. Note the appropriateness of the little particle "then", showing the connection of winds with rain.

1961. Cf. the previous verse, and n. 1958. Man may store water in cisterns, tanks, lakes, and head-waters of canals. But he has no control over its original sources, which are the clouds, which, by the help of the winds, act as the grand distributors of water over wide spaces of the world's surface.

1962. This verse must be understood as furnishing an example or illustration of what is said in the last verse.

1963. Note how the argument has mounted up from xv. 16 onwards to xv. 23—from things most remote from man to things touching his inmost being, and each of them in its own way is a wonderful instance of God's glory and goodness, and the beauty, order, and harmony of His creation. First, the heavens, the zodiacal Signs, the stars, and the mysterious phenomena that we see above us; then the earth, and the perfect balance of life and forces therein, with man as an important factor, but not the only factor; then, the inexhaustible sources of energy, of which God alone is the fountain-head, but which come to us in measured proportions, as needed; and lastly, Life and Death itself, which will pass away, but God will remain. A noble passage, and a fine vindication of God's wisdom and providence in dealing with His creatures.

1964. Literally, "We are the Heirs, or Inheritors." Cf. iii, 180: "To God belongs the heritage of the heavens and the earth." See also the latter part of n. 988 to vi. 156.

24. **Who** Us are known those of you  
Who hasten forward, and those  
Who lag behind.<sup>1965</sup>

۲۴- وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْنَا الْمُسْتَقْدِمِينَ مِنْكُمْ  
وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْنَا الْمُسْتَأْخِرِينَ ۝

25. Assuredly it is thy Lord  
Who will gather them together:  
For He is Perfect in Wisdom  
And Knowledge.

۲۵- وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ يَجْشُرُهُمْ  
إِلَآهَهُمْ حَكِيمٌ عَلِيمٌ ۝

C. 120.—Man's origin was from dust, lowly;  
(xv. 26-50.) But his rank was raised above that  
Of other creatures because God breathed  
Into him His spirit. Jealousy and arrogance  
Caused the fall of Iblis, the Power of Evil:  
But no power has Evil o'er those sincere  
Souls who worship God and seek His Way.  
Many are the gates of Evil, but Peace  
And dignified joy will be the goal  
Of those whom the Grace of God has made His own.

### SECTION 3.

26. **We** created man from sounding  
clay,<sup>1966</sup>  
From mud moulded into shape;

۲۶- وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ صَلْصَالٍ  
مِنْ حَمِإٍ مَسْنُونٍ ۝

27. And the Jinn race, We had  
Created before, from the fire  
Of a scorching wind.<sup>1967</sup>

۲۷- وَالْجَانَّ خَلَقْنَاهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ مِنْ  
نَارِ السَّمُومِ ۝

28. **Behold!** thy Lord said  
To the angels: "I am about  
To create man, from sounding clay,  
From mud moulded into shape;

۲۸- وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ إِنِّي خَالِقٌ  
بَشَرًا مِّنْ صَلْصَالٍ مِّنْ حَمِإٍ مَّسْنُونٍ ۝

1965. Cf. ix. 100, where the *Sābiqūn* may perhaps correspond to the *Mustaqdimīn* here. In that case the two classes are those who are the first to accept Faith and do deeds of righteousness and those who come later, but are still numbered with the righteous. A second alternative meaning may be: "those who preceded you in point of time and those who come after you in point of time; they are all known to God, and He will gather them all together on the Day of Judgment."

1966. *Ṣalṣāl*: dry clay which produces a sound, like pottery. Cf. iv. 14. Taking verses 26 and 29 together, I understand the meaning to be: that man's body was formed from wet clay moulded into shape and then dried until it could emit sound (perhaps referring to speech); that it was then further fashioned and completed; that into the animal form thus fashioned was breathed the spirit of God, which gave it a superiority over other Creation; and that the order for obeisance was then given.

1967. Cf. vi. 100, and n. 929.

29. "When I have fashioned him  
(In due proportion) and breathed  
Into him of My spirit,  
Fall ye down in obeisance  
Unto him."<sup>1968</sup>

۲۹- وَإِذَا سَوَّيْتُهُ  
وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِي  
فَسَجِدُوا لَهُ سَاجِدِينَ ○

30. So the angels prostrated themselves,  
All of them together:

۳۰- فَسَجَدَ الْمَلَائِكَةُ كُلُّهُمْ أَجْمَعُونَ ○

31. Not so <sup>1969</sup> Iblis: <sup>1970</sup> he refused to be  
Among those who prostrated  
themselves.<sup>1971</sup>

۳۱- إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ  
أَبَى أَنْ يَكُونَ مَعَ السَّاجِدِينَ ○

32. (God) said: "O Iblis!  
What is your reason  
For not being among those  
Who prostrated themselves?"

۳۲- قَالَ يَا إِبْلِيسُ مَا لَكَ  
أَلَّا تَكُونَ مَعَ السَّاجِدِينَ ○

33. (Iblis) said: "I am not one  
To prostrate myself to man,  
Whom Thou didst create  
From sounding clay, from mud  
Moulded into shape."

۳۳- قَالَ لِمَ أَكُنْ لَا سَجْدَ لِبَشَرٍ  
خَلَقْتَهُ مِنْ صَلْصَالٍ  
رَمْنٍ حَمِئًا مَسْنُونٍ ○

34. (God) said: "Then get thee out  
From here; for thou art  
Rejected, accursed."

۳۴- قَالَ فَاخْرُجْ مِنْهَا  
فَأَنْتَ رَجِيمٌ ○

35. "And the Curse shall be  
On thee till the Day of  
Judgment."<sup>1972</sup>

۳۵- وَلَئِنْ عَلَيْكَ الْعَذَابُ إِلَى يَوْمِ الدِّينِ ○

1968. Among other passages where the creation of Adam is referred to, cf. the following: ii 30-39; vii 11-25. Note that here the emphasis is on three points: (1) the breathing of God's spirit into man, i.e., the faculty of God-like knowledge and will, which, if rightly used, would give man superiority over other creatures; (2) the origin of evil in arrogance and jealousy on the part of Satan, who saw only the lower side of man (his clay) and failed to see the higher side, the faculty brought in by the spirit of God; (3) that this evil only touches those who yield to it, and has no power over God's sincere servants, purified by His grace (xv. 40, 42).

1969. Cf. n. 49 to ii. 34.

1970. Iblis: the name has in it the root-idea of desperateness or rebellion. Cf. n. 52 to ii. 36.

1971. Apparently Iblis's arrogance had two grounds: (1) that man was made of clay while he was made of fire; (2) that he did not wish to do what others did. Both grounds were false: (1) because man had the spirit of God breathed into him; (2) because contempt of the angels who obeyed God's word showed not Iblis's superiority but his inferiority. The word "basha" for man (verse 33) suggests a gross physical body.

1972. After the Day of Judgment the whole constitution of the universe will be different. There will be a new world altogether, on a wholly different plane. (Cf. xxi, 104.)

36. (Iblis) said: "O my Lord!  
Give me then respite<sup>1973</sup>  
Till the Day  
The (dead) are raised."

٣٦- قَالَ رَبِّ فَأَنْظِرْنِي  
إِلَى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ ○

37. (God) said: "Respite  
Is granted thee—

٣٧- قَالَ فَإِنَّكَ مِنَ الْمُنْظَرِينَ ○

38. "Till the Day  
Of the Time Appointed."

٣٨- إِلَى يَوْمِ الْوَقْتِ الْمَعْلُومِ ○

39. (Iblis) said: "O my Lord!  
Because Thou hast put me<sup>1974</sup>  
In the wrong, I will  
Make (wrong) fair-seeming  
To them on the earth,  
And I will put them<sup>1975</sup>  
All in the wrong,—

٣٩- قَالَ رَبِّ بِمَا أَغْوَيْتَنِي  
لَأُزَيِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ  
وَلَأُغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ○

40. "Except Thy servants among them,  
Sincere and purified  
(By Thy grace)."

٤٠- إِلَّا عِبَادَكَ وَهُمْ الْمَخْلَصِينَ ○

41. (God) said: "This (Way  
Of My sincere servants) is  
Indeed a Way that leads  
Straight to Me."<sup>1976</sup>

٤١- قَالَ هَذَا  
صِرَاطٌ عَلَيَّ مُسْتَقِيمٌ ○

1973. What was this respite? The curse on Iblis remained, i.e., he was deprived of God's grace and became in the spiritual world what an outlaw is in a political kingdom. An earthly kingdom may not be able to catch and destroy an outlaw. But God is Omnipotent, and such power as Iblis may have can only come through the respite granted by God. The respite then is what is expressed in xv. 39 below. In God's grant of limited free-will to man is implied the faculty of choosing between good and evil, and this faculty is exercised through the temptations and allurements put forward by Satan, "the open enemy" of man. This is for the period of man's probation on this earth. Even so, no temptations have power over the sincere worshippers of God, who are purified by His grace.

1974. *Agwaitant*: 'thrown me out of the way, put me in the wrong': Cf. vii. 16. Satan as the Power of Evil cannot be straight or truthful even before God. By his own arrogance and rebellion he fell; he attributes this to God. Between God's righteous judgment and Satan's snares and temptations there cannot be the remotest comparison. Yet he presumes to put them on an equal footing. He is taking advantage of the respite.

1975. Iblis (the Rebellious) is powerless against God. He turns therefore against man, and becomes Satan (the Enemy).

1976. To be sincere in the worship of God is to obtain purification from all stain of evil and exemption from all influence of evil. It changes the whole nature of man. After that, evil cannot touch him. Evil will acknowledge him to be beyond its power and will not even tempt him. Apart from such purified souls, every one who worships God invites God's grace to protect him. But if he puts himself in the way of wrong and deliberately chooses evil, he must take the consequences. The blame is not even on Satan, the power of evil: it is on the sinner himself, who puts himself into his power: xiv. 22; xv. 42.

42. "For over My servants  
No authority shalt thou  
Have, except such as  
Put themselves in the wrong  
And follow thee."

۴۲- اِنَّ عِبَادِيْ لَيْسَ لَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطٰنٌ  
اِلَّا مِّنَ التَّبَعِكَ مِنَ الْغٰوِيْنَ ۝

43. And verily, Hell  
Is the promised abode  
For them all!

۴۳- وَاِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ  
لَمَوْعِدُهُمْ اَجْعَلِيْنَ ۝

44. To it are seven Gates: <sup>1977</sup>  
For each of those Gates  
Is a (special) class  
(Of sinners) assigned.

۴۴- لَهَا سَبْعَةُ اَبْوَابٍ  
لِّكُلِّ بَابٍ فَوْقَهُمْ جُزْءٌ مَّقْسُوْمٌ ۝

#### SECTION 4.

45. The righteous (will be)  
Amid Gardens  
And fountains  
(Of clear-flowing water).

۴۵- اِنَّ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ فِيْ جَدَّتٍ  
وَعِيْنٍ ۝

46. (Their greeting will be):  
"Enter ye here  
In Peace and Security."

۴۶- اُدْخُلُوْهَا بِسَلٰمٍ اٰمِنِيْنَ ۝

47. And We shall remove  
From their hearts any  
Lurking sense of injury: <sup>1978</sup>  
(They will be) brothers  
(Joyfully) facing each other  
On thrones (of dignity).

۴۷- وَنَزَعْنَا مَا فِيْ صُدُوْرِهِمْ  
مِّنْ غِلٍ  
اِخْوَانًا عَلٰى سُرُرٍ مُّتَقَابِلِيْنَ ۝

48. No sense of fatigue  
Shall touch them,  
Nor shall they (ever)  
Be asked to leave.

۴۸- لَا يَمَسُّهُمْ فِيْهَا نَصَبٌ  
وَمَا هُمْ مِنْهَا بِمُخْرَجِيْنَ ۝

1977. Seven is a mystic number. The ways of sin are numerous, and if they are classified into seven, each of them points to a Gate that leads to Hell.

Apart from the literal meaning, which is itself based on metaphors, the whole of this section and indeed of this Sûra, is full of mystic meaning, which it is outside the power or scope or limits of a running Commentary to expound adequately.

1978. Cf. vii, 43, and n. 1021. The hearts and minds will be so purified that all past rancour, jealousy, or sense of injury will be obliterated. The true Brotherhood will be realised there, when each will have his own dignity; there will be no question of invidious comparisons; each will face the others with joy and confidence. There will be no sense of toil or fatigue, and the joy will last for ever.

49. Tell my servants<sup>1979</sup>  
That I am indeed  
The Oft-Forgiving,  
Most Merciful;

٣٩- قُلْ إِنِّي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ  
إِنِّي أَنَا الْعَفْوَُّ الرَّحِيمُ

50. And that My Penalty  
Will be indeed  
The most grievous Penalty.

٥٠- وَأَنَّ عَذَابِي هُوَ الْعَذَابُ الْأَلِيمُ

C. 121.—God's Grace and Mercy are always  
(xv. 51-84.) First, but His Justice and Wrath will seize  
Those who defy His Law. Even when  
The unspeakable crimes of the Cities  
Of the Plain made their destruction  
Inevitable, God's message of Mercy  
To mankind was sent to Abraham  
And of safety to Lot. The last remnants  
Of sin will be cut off, and the Signs  
And Tokens thereof are plain for all  
To see. The proud Companions of the Wood  
And the builders of Rocky Fortresses  
Were all swept away because of their sins.

51. Tell them about  
The guests of Abraham.<sup>1980</sup>

٥١- وَنَبِّئْهُمْ عَنْ ضَيْفِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ

52. When they entered his presence  
And said, "Peace!"  
He said, "We feel  
Afraid of you!"<sup>1981</sup>

٥٢- إِذْ دَخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ فَقَالُوا سَلَامًا  
قَالَ إِنَّا مِنْكُمْ وَجَلُونَ

53. They said: "Fear not!  
We give thee glad tidings

٥٣- قَالُوا لَا تَوْجَلْ إِنَّا نُبَشِّرُكَ

1979. We must realise both sides of God's attributes: His mercy, grace, and forgiveness are unbounded; if we reject all this, His justice and punishment will also be beyond all that we can conceive.

1980. In illustration of the contrasts between Good and Evil, and the consequences that flow from them, we have now a reference to four incidents from the past, viz.: (1) an incident from the story of Abraham; (2) from that of Lot, nephew of Abraham, and the end of the Cities of the Plain, which he was sent to warn; (3) the People of the Wood; and (4) the People of the Rocky Tract (*Hijr*), after whom this Sūra is called. As usual, the recital of God's abounding grace comes first.

1981. For a full understanding of this reference to the angels who were Abraham's guests and came to announce the birth of a son to him in his old age, read xi. 69-73 and notes. The appearance of two strangers of uncommon appearance, who refused to partake of the host's sumptuous hospitality, made Abraham at first suspicious and afraid

Of a son endowed  
With wisdom." 1982

54. He said: "Do ye give me  
Glad tidings that old age  
Has seized me? Of what,  
Then, is your good news?"

55. They said: "We give thee  
Glad tidings in truth:  
Be not in despair!"

56. He said: "And who  
Despairs of the mercy  
Of his Lord, but such  
As go astray?" 1983

57. Abraham said: 1994 "What  
then  
Is the business on which  
Ye (have come), O ye  
Messengers (of God)?"

58. They said: "We have been  
Sent to a people  
(Deep) in sin, 1985

59. "Excepting the adherents  
Of Luṭ: them we are certainly

يُعْلِمُونَا

٥٣- قَالَ ابَشِّرْهُنَّ عَلَىٰ أَن مَّسَّتْهُنَّ الْكِبَرُ  
فَيَمَّ تَبَشِّرُوْنَ

٥٥- قَالُوا ابَشِّرْكَ بِالْحَقِّ  
فَلَا تَكُن مِّنَ الْغَافِلِينَ

٥٦- قَالَ وَمَنْ يَقْنَطُ مِن رَّحْمَةِ رَبِّهِ  
إِلَّا الضَّالُّونَ

٥٧- قَالَ فَمَا خَطْبُكُمْ  
إِيَّاهَا الْمُرْسَلُونَ

٥٨- قَالُوا إِنَّا أُرْسِلْنَا إِلَىٰ قَوْمٍ  
مُّجْرِمِينَ

٥٩- إِلَّا آلَ لُوطٍ إِنَّا

1982. The birth of a son in old age to a sonless father was glad tidings to Abraham personally. The birth of a son endowed with wisdom promised something infinitely more. Considering that the angels were divine messengers, the wisdom referred to was divine wisdom, and the event became an event of prime importance in the world's religious history. For Abraham became, through his progeny, the root of the three great universal religions diffused throughout the world.

1983. Notice the gentle humour in the slight misunderstandings, which are no sooner expressed than they are removed.

1984. When cordial understanding was established between Abraham and his guests, and probably when the guests were about to depart, Abraham put a question to them: "What is the mission on which 'you are going?' It was further implied: "Is there anything I can do to help?" But no. The mission was one of Punishment for abominable sins. Note that the mention of God's Wrath is always linked with that of God's Mercy, and the Mercy comes first. The same angels that came to punish Sodom and Gomorrah were charged first to give the good news of God's Mercy to Abraham in the shape of a long line of Teachers of Righteousness.

1985. The Cities of the Plain round the Dead Sea, which to this day is called the Baḥr Luṭ. They were given to unspeakable abominations. Read in this connection xi. 77-83 and notes.



(Charged) to save  
(from harm),—<sup>1986</sup>

All—

60. "Except his wife, who,  
We have ascertained,  
Will be among those  
Who will lag behind."<sup>1987</sup>

#### SECTION 5.

61. At length when the messengers  
Arrived among the adherents<sup>1988</sup>  
Of Lūt,

62. He said: "Ye appear  
To be uncommon folk."

63. They said: "Yea,  
We have come to thee  
To accomplish that  
Of which they doubt."<sup>1989</sup>

64. "We have brought to thee  
That which is inevitably<sup>1990</sup>  
Due, and assuredly  
We tell the truth.

65. "Then travel by night  
With thy household,  
When a portion of the night  
(Yet remains), and do thou

لَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْنَاعِينَ ۝

٦٠- إِلَّا امْرَأَتَهُ قَدَرْنَا  
إِنَّمَا لَمْ يَخُفْ يَوْمَئِذٍ الْغَدِيرِينَ ۝

٦١- فَلَمَّا جَاءَ آلَ لُوطٍ الْمُرْسَلُونَ ۝

٦٢- قَالَ إِنَّكُمْ قَوْمٌ مُّتَكَبِّرُونَ ۝

٦٣- قَالُوا بَلْ جِئْنَاكَ  
بِمَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَسْتَمْتِرُونَ ۝

٦٤- وَآتَيْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ  
وَأِنَّا لَصَدُوقُونَ ۝

٦٥- فَانْصِرْ بِأَهْلِكَ  
بِقِطْعٍ مِّنَ اللَّيْلِ

1986. Here, again, God's saving Grace is linked with His Wrath, and is mentioned first.

1987. See xi. 81, and n. 1577.

1988. *Āl* means people who adhere to the ways and teaching of a great Teacher; e. g., *Āl-i-Muhammadi*: it does not necessarily mean race or descendants. *Ahl* (xv. 65 below) usually implies "household" but may be taken in an extended sense to include People generally: see xv. 67. *Qaum* (xv. 62) may be any collection or aggregate of people. In xi 70 the hostile inhabitants of the Cities of the Plain are called the *qaum-i-Lūt* (the People of Lūt). *Aṣṭab* (companions) refers to a Group rather than to a People: Cf. xv. 78.

1989. The unusual appearance of the angels struck Lot as it had struck Abraham. Knowing the abominable vices to which the Cities were addicted, he feared to entertain handsome young men. They at once disclosed their mission to him in mystic language. In effect they said: "You, Lot, have been preaching in vain to these wicked Cities. When you warn them of their inevitable end, Destruction, they laugh and doubt. Now their doubt will be resolved. Their destruction will be accomplished before the morning."

1990. Another meaning of *Al-Haqq*: the Punishment which is justly and inevitably due, which must certainly come to pass, Cf. xxii. 18.

Bring up the rear :  
Let no one amongst you  
Look back, but pass on  
Whither ye are ordered."

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا هُمْ وَلَا يَلْتَفِتُونَ مِنْكُمْ أَحَدٌ  
وَأَمُّوا حَيْثُ تُؤْمَرُونَ ○

66. And We made known  
This decree to him,  
That the last remnants  
Of those (sinners) should be  
Cut off by the morning.<sup>1991</sup>

٦٦- وَقَضَيْنَا إِلَيْهِ ذَلِكَ الْأَمْرَ  
أَنَّهُ دَابِرُهُمْ وَأَنَّهُ مَقْطُوعٌ مَتَدِينٍ ○

67. The inhabitants of the City  
Came in (mad) joy  
(At news of the young men).<sup>1992</sup>

٦٧- وَجَاءَ أَهْلُ الْمَدِينَةِ يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ ○

68. Lot said : " These are  
My guests: disgrace me not :

٦٨- قَالَ إِنَّ هَؤُلَاءِ طَائِفَةٌ فَلَا تُفْضَحُونِ ○

69. " But fear God,  
And shame me not."

٦٩- وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُخْزُونِ ○

70. They said : " Did we not  
Forbid thee (to speak)  
For all and sundry ?" <sup>1993</sup>

٧٠- قَالُوا أَوَلَمْ نَنْهَكَ عَنِ الْعَالَمِينَ ○

71. He said : " There are  
My daughters (to marry),  
If ye must act (so)."<sup>1994</sup>

٧١- قَالَ هَؤُلَاءِ بَنَاتِي إِنْ كُنْتُمْ فَاعِلِينَ ○

72. Verily, by thy life (O Prophet),  
In their wild intoxication,

٧٢- لَعَنَّاكَ إِنَّهُمْ لَغَفَىٰ سَكَرَتِهِمْ ○

1991. As the last remnants of the wicked were to be cut off, and as the Mercy of God wished to save every true soul who might be with Lot, God's decree was made known to Lot, so that he might save his adherents.

1992. They were addicted to unnatural crime, and the news of the advent of handsome young men inflamed them. How true it is that at the very verge of destruction, men rush blindly to their fate, and cut off any last hope of repentance and mercy for themselves. Cf. xv. 72 below.

1993. I understand the meaning to be that Lot, the only righteous man in the City, had frequently remonstrated with the inhabitants against their unnatural crimes, and they had forbidden him to speak to them again on behalf of any one, "as if" (they might tauntingly say) "he was the protector of all and sundry".

Some Commentators understand the verse to mean : 'Did we not forbid thee to entertain any strangers ?'

1994. Cf. xi. 78, n. 1575. "My daughters" in the mouth of a venerable man may mean young girls of the City, which would be appropriate considering the large number of men who came to besiege Lot's house.

They wander in distraction,  
To and fro.<sup>1995</sup>

73. But the (mighty) Blast<sup>1996</sup>  
Overtook them before morning,

74. And We turned (the Cities)  
Upside down, and rained down  
On them brimstones  
Hard as baked clay.<sup>1997</sup>

75. Behold! in this are Signs  
For those who by tokens  
Do understand.

76. And the (Cities were)  
Right on the high-road.<sup>1998</sup>

77. Behold! in this  
Is a Sign  
For those who believe!<sup>1999</sup>

78. And the Companions of the  
Wood<sup>2000</sup>  
Were also wrong-doers;

يَعْمُؤُونَ

٤٣- فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الصَّيْحَةُ مُشْرِقِينَ

٤٢- فَجَعَلْنَاهَا عَلَيْهِمْ سَاوِلَهَا وَأَمْطَرْنَا  
عَلَيْهِمْ حِجَارَةً مِنْ سِجِّيلٍ

٤٥- إِنْ فِي ذَلِكَ لَايَةٌ لِلْمُتَوَكِّلِينَ

٤٦- وَإِنَّهَا لَلسَّيِّئِينَ مُعْقِلَةٌ

٤٤- إِنْ فِي ذَلِكَ لَايَةٌ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

٤٨- وَإِنْ كَانَ أَصْحَابُ الْأَيْكَةِ ظَالِمِينَ

1995. The wild, mad fury of passion and sin attains its own destruction and cuts off the last hope of repentance or mercy.

1996. *As-Saihat*, the mighty Blast, is mentioned as accompanying earthquakes: Cf. xi. 67, 94. Here it was the violent wind and noise accompanying the shower of brimstones, possibly with some volcanic action.

1997. Cf. xi. 82 and notes, in which the word *Sijjil* and its origin are explained.

1998. The Cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were utterly destroyed, and even their precise position cannot be identified. But the brimstone plain of the tract still exists, right on the highway between Arabia and Syria. To the traveller in the neighbourhood of the Dead Sea the whole locality presents a scene of dismal desolation which truly suggests the awful punishment for unspeakable crimes.

1999. Verse 75 refers to all who have the intelligence to grasp the Signs of God. Verses 76-77 specially refer to those who use the Arabia-Syria highroad. The desolation is specially brought home to them.

2000. "Companions of the Wood": *Aṣ-ḥab ul Aikati*. Perhaps *Aika* is after all a proper noun, the name of a town or tract. Who were the Companions of the Aika? They are mentioned four times in the Qur-ān, viz., here, and in xxvi. 176-191; xxxviii. 13; and l. 14. The only passage in which any details are given is xxvi. 176-191. There we are told that their Prophet was Shu'aib, and other details given correspond to those of the Madyan, to whom Shu'aib was sent as Apostle: see vii. 85-93. In my notes to that passage I have discussed the question of Shu'aib and the Madyan people. It is reasonable to suppose that the Companions of the Wood were either the same as the Madyan, or a Group among them or in their neighbourhood.

79. So We exacted retribution  
From them. They were both<sup>2001</sup>  
On an open highway,  
Plain to see.

## SECTION 6.

80. The Companions of the Rocky  
Tract<sup>2002</sup>  
Also rejected the apostles :

81. We sent them Our Signs,  
But they persisted  
In turning away from them.

82. Out of the mountains<sup>2003</sup>  
Did they hew their edifices,  
(Feeling themselves) secure.

83. But the (mighty) Blast<sup>2004</sup>  
Seized them of a morning,

84. And of no avail to them  
Was all that they did  
(With such art and care !)

٤٩- وَأَتَقْنَاهُمْ مِنْهُمْ  
وَأَنهَمَا لِيَأْمَا مُمْسِكِينَ ۝

٨٠- وَلَقَدْ كَذَّبَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَبَلِ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ۝

٨١- وَأَتَيْنَاهُمْ آيَاتِنَا  
فَكَانُوا عَنْهَا مُمِرَّضِينَ ۝

٨٢- وَكَانُوا يَحْنَثُونَ مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوتًا  
أُمُومِينَ ۝

٨٣- فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الصَّيْحَةُ مُضْجِينَ ۝

٨٤- فَمَا أَغْنَى عَنْهُمْ كَيْدُهُمْ فَكَانُوا يَسُبُونَ ۝

C. 122.—But God's Creation doth bear witness  
(xv. 85-99.) To God's Design and Mercy. His Plan  
Is sure. His gift of the glorious Qur-ān  
Is more than any worldly goods can be.  
So, while we denounce Sin openly,  
Let us be gentle and kind, and adore  
And serve our Lord all our lives.

85. We created not the heavens,  
The earth, and all between them,

٨٥- وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَبَيْنَهُمَا ۝

2001. Both : *i. e.*, The Cities of the Plain and the Companions of the Aika.

2002. "The Rocky Tract" is undoubtedly a geographical name. On the maps of Arabia will be found a tract called the *Hijr*, north of Medina. Jabal *Hijr* is about 150 miles north of Medina. The tract would fall on the highway to Syria. This was the country of the *Thamūd*. For them and the country see vii. 73, n. 1043.

2003. Remains of these rock edifices in the *Hijr* are still found, and the City of Petra is not more than 380 miles from Jabal *Hijr*. See n. 1043 to vii. 73. "Petra" in Greek means "Rock". For the Inscriptions found there, and their significance, see Appendix IX to S. xxvi.

2004. The mighty rumbling noise and wind accompanying an earthquake. See vii. 78, n. 1047.

But for just ends.<sup>2005</sup>  
 And the Hour is surely  
 Coming (when this will be  
 manifest).  
 So overlook (any faults)  
 With gracious forgiveness.<sup>2006</sup>

86. For verily it is thy Lord  
 Who is the Master-Creator,<sup>2007</sup>  
 Knowing all things.

87. And We have bestowed  
 Upon thee the Seven  
 Oft-repeated (Verses)<sup>2008</sup>  
 And the Grand Qur-ān.

88. Strain not thine eyes  
 (Wistfully) at what We  
 Have bestowed on certain  
 classes<sup>2009</sup>  
 Of them, nor grieve over them:<sup>2010</sup>

لَا بِالْحَقِّ  
 وَإِنَّ السَّاعَةَ لَأَتِيَةٌ  
 فَاصْفِرْ صَفَرَ الْجَيْلِ ۝

٨٦- إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ الْخَلْقُ الْعَلِيمُ ۝

٨٧- وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَاكَ سَبْعًا  
 مِنَ الْمَثَانِ وَالْقُرْآنَ الْعَظِيمَ ۝

٨٨- لَا تَكْذِبْ عَيْنِيكَ  
 إِلَىٰ مَا مَتَّعْنَا بِهِ أَزْوَاجًا مِنْهُمْ  
 وَلَا تَحْزَنْ عَلَيْهِمْ

2005. God's Creation is all for a true, just, and righteous purpose. Cf. x. 5. It is not for mere whim or sport : xxi. 16.

2006. The Hour will not be long delayed when the true Design and Pattern of Life will be manifest. We must not be impatient, if there appear to be, to our limited vision, apparent injustices. We must bear and forbear, and as far as our own personal feelings are concerned, we must overlook other people's faults with "a gracious forgiveness".

2007. *Khallāq*: the emphatic intensive form, as meaning the Creator, Who is perfect in His skill and knowledge, and Whose creation answers perfectly to His design. Therefore no one should think that anything has gone wrong in God's creation. What may seem out of joint is merely the result of our short sighted standards. It often happens that what appears to us to be evil or imperfect or unjust is a reflection of our own imperfect minds. See the next two verses and notes.

2008. The Seven Oft-repeated Verses are usually understood to be the Opening Sūra, the *Fātiḥa*. They sum up the whole teaching of the Qur-ān. What can be a more precious gift to a Muslim than the glorious Qur-ān or any Sūra of it? Worldly wealth, honour, possessions, or anything else, sinks into insignificance in comparison with it.

2009. It may be that other people have worldly goods which worldly men envy. Do they necessarily bring happiness? Even the temporary pleasure that they may give is not unmixed with spiritual poisons, and even so, will not last. The man of God looks with wistful eyes at other things,—the favour and countenance of God.

2010. The man of God, in his human love and sympathy, may grieve over certain classes of people who are puffed up with false notions and callous to the Message of God. But he should not make himself unhappy. There is no flaw in God's Plan, and it must prevail. This was addressed in the first instance to Muṣṭafā, but in a minor degree, it applies to all righteous men.

But lower thy wing  
(in gentleness)<sup>2011</sup>  
To the Believers.

وَاخْفِضْ جَنَاحَكَ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

89. And say: "I am indeed he  
That warneth openly  
And without ambiguity,"—<sup>2012</sup>

۸۹- وَقُلْ إِنِّي أَنَا النَّذِيرُ الْمُبِينُ

90. (Of just such wrath)  
As We sent down  
On those who divided  
(Scripture into arbitrary  
parts),—<sup>2013</sup>

۹۰- كَمَا أَنْزَلْنَا  
عَلَى الْمُفْتَسِمِينَ

91. (So also on such)  
As have made the Qur-ān  
Into shreds (as they please).<sup>2014</sup>

۹۱- الَّذِينَ جَعَلُوا الْقُرْآنَ عِضِينَ

92. Therefore, by thy Lord,  
We will, of a surety,  
Call them to account,

۹۲- فَوَرَبِّكَ لَنَسْأَلَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ

93. For all their deeds.<sup>2015</sup>

۹۳- عَمَّا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

94. Therefore expound openly  
What thou art commanded,  
And turn away from those  
Who join false gods with God.

۹۴- فَأُصَدِّعْ بِمَا تُوَمَّرُ  
وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْمُشْرِكِينَ

95. For sufficient are We  
Unto thee against those

۹۵- إِنَّا كَفَيْنَاكَ

2011. The metaphor is from a bird who lowers her wing in tender solicitude for her little ones. Cf. xvii. 24, where it is applied to "lowering the wing" to aged parents.

2012. In the ministry of Muṣṭafā there was no mincing of matters, no compromises with evil. Evil was denounced in unambiguous terms.

2013. The Commentators differ as to the precise signification of verses 90 and 91. Are the persons referred to in the two verses the same, or different? And who were they? I adopt the view, for which there is good authority, that the two classes of persons were different, but similar. Verse 90, I think, refers to the Jews and Christians, who took out of Scripture what suited them, and ignored or rejected the rest: ii. 85, 101. For verse 91 see next note.

2014. The Meccan Pagans, in the early days of Islam, in order to dishonour and ridicule the Qur-ān, divided what was so far revealed, into bits, and apportioned them to people coming on pilgrimage to Mecca by different routes, slandering and abusing the Apostle of God.

2015. Those who ridicule Scripture in any form will all be called to account for their insolence, for they are all alike.

Who scoff,—<sup>2016</sup>

96. Those who adopt, with God,  
Another god: but soon  
Will they come to know.

97. We do indeed know  
How thy heart is distressed<sup>2017</sup>  
At what they say.

98. But celebrate the praises  
Of thy Lord, and be of those  
Who prostrate themselves  
In adoration.

99. And serve thy Lord  
Until there come unto thee  
The Hour that is Certain.<sup>2018</sup>

الْمُسْتَهْزِئِينَ ۝

٩٦-الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ

فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ ۝

٩٧-وَلَقَدْ نَعْلَمُ أَنَّكَ يَضِيقُ صَدْرَكَ

بِمَا يَقُولُونَ ۝

٩٨-فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ

وَكُنْ مِنَ السَّاجِدِينَ ۝

٩٩-وَاعْبُدْ رَبَّكَ

حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِيَكَ الْيَقِينُ ۝



2016. If the whole world is ranged against the man of God, as was at one time the case with the Apostle, and they scoff at all that is sacred, the sense of God's presence and protection outweighs all. And after all, the scoffers are creatures of a day. Soon will they find their level, and be undeceived as to all their falsehoods. But the Truth of God endures for ever.

2017. Literally, 'that thy breast is constrained'.

2018. Yaqin: Certainty; the Hour that is Certain; death.

INTRODUCTION TO SŪRA XVI (*Nahl*)

Chronologically this Sūra, like the six which preceded it, belongs to the late Meccan period, except perhaps verse 110 and some of the verses that follow. But the chronology has no significance. In subject-matter it sums up, from a new point of view, the arguments on the great questions of God's dealings with man, His Self-revelation to man, and how the Messengers and the Message are writ large in every phase of God's Creation and the life of Man. The new point of view is that Nature points to Nature's God.

*Summary*

Everything in Creation proclaims the glory of God. To man is given dominion over Nature, that man may recognise God's Unity and God's Truth (xvi. 1-25, and C. 123).

Man should never lose sight of his goal, which is the Good, or dispute with the great Teachers, who are sent to all Peoples, to bring about Unity: all creatures serve God (xvi. 26-50, and C. 124)

God's favours and man's ingratitude recounted His Signs in the rain-bearing clouds, the cattle that give milk, the bee that produces honey, the wonderful relations of family and social life, and the refinements and comforts of civilization (xvi. 51-83, and C. 125).

The Messengers of Truth will bear witness against those who reject the Truth. God will judge us according to our faith and deeds (xvi. 84-100, and C. 126).

The Qur-ān is true: it guides and gives glad tidings. Believe, and make the most of Life in all things good and lawful. Follow the example of Abraham: be true in Faith and righteous, and do good (xvi. 101-128, and C. 127).

C. 123.—God's Command must inevitably  
(xvi. 1-25) Come to pass. But all His Creation  
Proclaims His glory, and leads to His Truth.  
In all things has He furnished man  
With favours innumerable,  
To lead and guide him and bring him  
To Himself. Why then does man  
Refuse the Truth, except for arrogance?  
Why does he run after false gods,  
Thus acting against his own lights  
And misleading others less blest in knowledge?



## Sura XVI.

*Nahl*, or The Bee.*In the name of God, Most Gracious,  
Most Merciful.*

1. (Inevitably) cometh (to pass)  
The Command of God: <sup>2019</sup>  
Seek ye not then  
To hasten it: glory to Him,  
And far is He above  
Having the partners  
They ascribe unto Him!
2. He doth send down His angels  
With inspiration of His Command,  
To such of His servants  
As He pleaseth, (saying):  
"Warn (Man) that there is  
No god but I: so do  
Your duty unto Me," <sup>2020</sup>
3. He has created the heavens  
And the earth for just ends: <sup>2021</sup>  
Far is He above having  
The partners they ascribe to Him!
4. **لَمَّا** he has created man  
From a sperm-drop;  
And behold this same (man)  
Becomes an open disputer! <sup>2022</sup>



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

۱- اِنِّیْ اَمْرٌ اَللّٰهُ  
فَلَا تَسْتَعْجِلُوْهُ  
سُبْحٰنَهُ  
وَتَعٰلٰی عَمَّا یُشْرَکُّوْنَ ۝

۲- یُنَزِّلُ الْمَلَائِکَةَ بِالرُّوْحِ مِنْ اَمْرِہٖ  
عَلٰی مَنْ یَّشَآءُ مِنْ عِبَادِہٖ  
اَنْ اُنْذِرُوْا اَنَّهُ لَآ اِلٰہَ اِلَّا  
اَنَا فَاتَّقُوْنَ ۝

۳- خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ  
تَعٰلٰی عَمَّا یُشْرَکُّوْنَ ۝

۴- خَلَقَ الْاِنْسَانَ مِنْ نُّطْفَۃٍ  
فَاِذَا هُوَ خَصِيْمٌ مُّبِیْنٌ ۝

1919. This is an answer to the taunt of the Pagans, who said: "If there is a god, the One True God, as you say, with unified control, why does He not punish the wrong-doers at once?" The answer is: "The decree of God will inevitably come to pass; it will come soon enough; when it comes, you will wish it were delayed; how foolish of you to wish even to cut off your last hope of forgiveness?"

2020. The Pagans, with their multiplicity of gods and goddesses, good and evil, could play one off against another. That is mere mockery of religion. With such conceptions, man cannot understand the Unity of Design in the Universe nor realise the Power and Glory of the One True God, to Whom alone worship and service are due.

2021. Not for sport, or fortuitously and without Design. Cf. xv. 85. Surely the Unity of Design in Creation also proves the Unity of God their Creator.

2022. Man's physical origin is lowly. Yet do men go back to material things, and neglect or dispute about the highest things in Life.

5. <sup>2023</sup> And cattle He has created  
For you (men): from them  
Ye derive warmth,  
And numerous benefits,<sup>2024</sup>  
And of their (meat) ye eat.

هـ وَالْأَنْعَامَ خَلَقَهَا  
لَكُمْ فِيهَا دِفْءٌ  
وَمِنْهَا تَأْكُلُونَ ۝

6. And ye have a sense  
Of pride and beauty in them  
As ye drive them home  
In the evening, and as ye  
Lead them forth to pasture  
In the morning.<sup>2025</sup>

وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا جَمَالٌ  
حِينَ تَرْجِعُونَ  
وَحِينَ تَخْرُجُونَ ۝

7. And they carry your heavy loads  
To lands that ye could not  
(Otherwise) reach except with <sup>2026</sup>  
Souls distressed: for your Lord  
Is indeed Most Kind, Most  
Merciful.

بِوَسْطِهِمْ أَنْتَ إِلَىٰ بَلَدٍ لَّمْ تَكُونُوا  
بِلَغِيهِ إِلَّا بِشِقِّ الْأَنْفُسِ  
إِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ لَرؤُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ ۝

8. And (He has created) horses,  
Mules, and donkeys, for you  
To ride and use for show;<sup>2027</sup>  
And he has created (other) things  
Of which ye have no knowledge.<sup>2028</sup>

هـ وَالْخَيْلَ وَالْبِغَالَ وَالْحَمِيرَ  
لِتَرْكَبُوهَا وَزِينَةً  
وَيَخْلُقُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ۝

2023. Why will you go back to material things, considering that material things are made subservient to your use and enjoyment in various ways as suggested in the clauses that follow.

2024. From wool, and hair, and skins, and milk. Camel's hair makes warm robes and blankets; and certain kinds of goats yield hair which makes similar fabrics. Sheep yield wool, and Llamas alpaca for similar uses. The skins and furs of many animals yield warm raiment or make warm rugs or bedding. The females of many of these animals yield good warm milk, a nourishing and wholesome diet. Then the flesh of many of these animals is good to eat. There are other uses, which the animals serve, and which are referred to later.

2025. The good man is proud of his cattle and is good to them. As they go to, and return from, pasture, morning and evening, he has a sense of his power and wealth and their beauty and docility. Will not man turn from these material facts to the great spiritual truths and purpose behind them?

2026. The cattle and animals also carry loads, and thus make inter-communication between different lands easy. But for them there would have been many difficulties, not only physical, but psychological. Weary men carrying loads are in no mood for social and spiritual intercourse. This intercourse is made possible by the kindness and mercy of God.

2027. Horses, mules, and donkeys as well as other animals may be beasts of burden, but they may also be pedigree animals bred for beauty and for all those more refined uses, such as processions, in which grace and elegance is the predominant feature.

2028. If we examine the history of transport, there have been vast changes through the ages, from rude pack animals to fine equipages, and then through mechanical contrivances, such means of transport as elegant coaches, tramways and railways, useful motor lorries and Rolls-Royce cars, and air-ships and aeroplanes of all descriptions. At any given point of time, many of these were yet unknown to man. Nor can we suppose the limit to have been reached now or that it will ever be reached at any future time. Through the mind and ingenuity of man it is God that creates new things hitherto unknown to man.

9. And unto God leads straight<sup>2029</sup>  
The Way, but there are ways  
That turn aside: if God  
Had willed, He could have  
Guided all of you.

## SECTION 2.

10. It is He Who sends down  
Rain from the sky:  
From it ye drink,  
And out of it (grows)  
The vegetation on which  
Ye feed your cattle.
11. With it He produces  
For you corn, olives,  
Date-palms, grapes,  
And every kind of fruit:  
Verily in this is a Sign  
For those who give thought.<sup>2030</sup>
12. He has made subject to you  
The Night and the Day;<sup>2031</sup>  
The Sun and the Moon;  
And the Stars are in subjection  
By His Command: verily  
In this are Signs  
For men who are wise.

وَعَلَى اللَّهِ قَصْدُ السَّبِيلِ  
وَمِنْهَا جَائِدٌ  
وَلَوْ شَاءَ لَهَدَىٰكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ۝

۱- هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً  
لَكُمْ مِنْهُ شَرَابٌ  
وَمِنْهُ شَجَرٌ مِنْهُ يُسَيِّمُونَ ۝

۱۱- يُنْبِتُ لَكُمْ بِهِ الزَّرْعَ وَالزَّيْتُونَ وَ  
التَّخْلِيلَ وَالْأَعْنَابَ وَمِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ  
إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ۝

۱۲- وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمْ الَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ  
وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ وَالنُّجُومَ مُسَخَّرَاتٍ  
بِأَمْرِهِ  
إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ۝

2029. Through material things "the Way" does always lead to God. But some minds are so obsessed with material things that they miss the pointers to the spiritual. God could have forced all to the true Way, but in His Will and Plan is the training of man's will, and that is done by the Signs in nature and in Revelation.

2030. The least thought and study of nature will show you God's wise and benign Providence in making the processes of nature subserve man's use and refined life. A higher degree of intelligence and study is required ("men who are wise") to understand God's Signs to man in the processes connected with the heavenly bodies (verse 12). And a still higher spiritual understanding ("men who celebrate His praises" with gratitude) to realise the marvellous gradations, colours, and nuances in the creatures on this little globe of ours (verse 13). Reason this out carefully.

2031. The Night and the Day are caused by astronomical rotations. What is important for man to note is how God has given intelligence to man to make use of this alternation for work and rest; how man can, as soon as he rises from the primitive stage, get over their inequalities by artificial illuminants, such as vegetable or mineral oils, coal, gas, or electricity, which ultimately are derived from the stored-up energy of the sun; how the sun's heat can be tempered by various artificial means and can be stored up for use by man as required; how man can be independent of the tides caused by the moon and the sun, which formerly controlled navigation, but which no longer stand in man's way, with his artificial harbours and great sea-going ships; how navigation was formerly subject to direct observation of the Polar Star and other stars, but how the magnetic needle and charts have now completely altered the position, and man can calculate and to a certain extent control magnetic variations, etc. In such ways the sun, the moon, and the stars themselves become useful servants to him, all by God's gift and His Command, without which there would have been no laws governing them and no intelligence to make use of them.

13. And the things on this earth  
Which He has multiplied  
In varying colours  
(and qualities):<sup>2032</sup>  
Verily in this is a Sign  
For men who celebrate  
The praises of God  
(in gratitude).<sup>2033</sup>

۱۳- وَمَا ذَرَأَ لَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ  
مُخْتَلِفًا أَلْوَانُهُ  
إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً  
لِّقَوْمٍ يَذْكُرُونَ ○

14. It is He Who has made<sup>2034</sup>  
The sea subject, that ye  
May eat thereof flesh  
That is fresh and tender,<sup>2035</sup>  
And that ye may extract  
Therefrom ornaments to wear;<sup>2036</sup>  
And thou seest the ships  
Therein that plough the waves,  
That ye may seek (thus)  
Of the bounty of God<sup>2037</sup>  
And that ye may be grateful.

۱۴- وَهُوَ الَّذِي سَخَّرَ الْبَحْرَ  
لِنَاكُلُوا مِنْهُ لَحْمًا طَرِيًّا  
وَتَسْتَخْرِجُوا مِنْهُ حِلْيَةً تَلْبَسُونَهَا  
وَتَرَى الْفُلَكَ مَوَازٍ فِيهِ  
وَلِتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ  
وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ○

2032. Whose heart has not been moved by the glorious gradation of colours in the sunset clouds? The gradations are infinite, and it is only the eye of an artist that can express their collective beauty. They are but a type of the infinite variety and gradation of qualities in the spiritual sphere even in the little space of our own globe. The big things that can be measured and defined have been spoken of before. Here we have mention of the subtle nuances in the spiritual world which can only be perceived by men who are so high in spiritual insight that their only reaction is to "celebrate the praises of God" in gratitude for His infinite Mercies.

2033. Read again n. 2030 above, and see how subtly we are led up from the perception of the big to the perception of the subtle and delicate colours and qualities in the spiritual world.

2034. We have gone up in a climax of material things from the big to the subtle in the sky and the earth. Here we have another climax as regards the things of the sea. We get the delicate flesh of fishes and marine creatures of all kinds; we get the treasures of the deep: pearls, coral, amber, and things of that kind; and we have the stately ships ploughing the waves, for maritime commerce and intercourse, for unifying mankind, and for realising the spiritual bounty of God, which can best be expressed by the boundless ocean.

2035. Connoisseurs know the delicate flavours of sea fish, such as the pomfret of the Indian Ocean, the herring of the North Atlantic, the mullet of Marseilles, and many another kind. *Tari*, translated "fresh and tender," also refers to the soft moist nature of fresh fish. It is another wonder of God that salt water should produce flesh of such fresh, tender, and delicate flavour.

2036. Diving for pearls—in both the primitive and the more advanced form—is another instance of man's power over apparently inaccessible depths of the sea.

2037. After the material benefits which we get from the sea, we are asked to consider things of higher import to the spirit of man. There is the beautiful ship which stands as the symbol of international commerce and intercourse, things that may be of material benefit, but which have a higher aspect in unifying man and making his civilisation more universal. These are first steps in seeking of the "bounty of God" through the sea. But there are higher aspects. Navigation and international intercourse increase knowledge, which in its higher aspects should clean the mind and make it fitter to approach God. The salt water, which covers nearly 72 per cent. of the surface of the Globe, is itself a purifying and sanitary agent, and is a good symbol of the higher bounties of God, which are as boundless as the Ocean.

15. And He has set up  
On the earth mountains <sup>2038</sup>  
Standing firm, lest it should  
Shake with you; and rivers  
And roads; that ye  
May guide yourselves; <sup>2039</sup>
16. And marks and sign-posts;  
And by the stars  
(Men) guide themselves. <sup>2040</sup>
17. As then He Who creates  
Like one that creates not?  
Will ye not receive admonition? <sup>2041</sup>
18. If ye would count up  
The favours of God,  
Never would ye be able  
To number them: for God  
Is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. <sup>2042</sup>

١٥- وَأَلْقَى فِي الْأَرْضِ رَوَاسِيَ  
أَنْ يَتَمِيدَ بِكُمْ وَأَنْهَارًا  
وَسُبُلًا لَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ ۝

١٦- وَعَلَمَاتٍ وَبِالنَّجْمِ  
هُمْ يَهْتَدُونَ ۝

١٧- أَفَلَا يَنْخَلِقُ كَمَنْ لَا يَخْلُقُ  
أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ ۝

١٨- وَإِنْ تَعُدُّوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ  
لَا تُحْصُوهَا  
إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَغَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ۝

2038. Cf. xiii. 3 and xv. 9. It is a favourite figure of speech to speak of the earth as a spacious carpet spread beneath our feet and the eternal hills as a steadying agent to keep the carpet from rolling or shaking about. In lxxviii 7 they are spoken of as pegs or stakes.

2039. In this passage (xvi. 15-16) we have the metaphor of the fixed mountains further allegorised. In these verses the key-words are indicated by the symbols for man's Guidance (*tahitādun*). First, the physical symbols are indicated: the mountains that stand firm and do not change from day to day in the landscape, unlike shifting sand-dunes, or the coast-line of the sea, or rivers and streams, which frequently change their courses; then we have rivers and roads, which are more precise and therefore more useful, though less permanent; then we have 'alāmāt (sign-posts), any kinds of signs erected by man, like direction posts, light-houses or beacons, or provided in nature, as tall trees, etc., and finally, we have the pole-star, and now the magnetic needle, with its variations marked on navigation charts. All these are symbols for the higher Guidance which God provides for the spirit of man. See next note.

2040. See last note. Let us examine the completed allegory. As there are beacons, landmarks, and signs to show the way to men on the earth, so in the spiritual world. And it is ultimately God Who provides them, and this is His crowning Mercy. Like the mountains there are spiritual Landmarks in the missions of the Great Teachers: they should guide us, or teach us to guide ourselves, and not shake hither and thither like a ship without a rudder or people without Faith. As rivers and streams mark out their channels, smoothing out levels, so we have wholesome Laws and Customs established, to help us in our lives. Then we have the examples of Great Men as further sign-posts: "Lives of great men all remind us, We can make our lives sublime." In long-distance travel, the pole-star and the magnetic needle are our guides: so in our long-distance journey to the other world, we have ultimately to look to heavenly guidance or its reflection in God's Revelation.

2041. The supreme majesty of God having been set out in His favours of all kinds, it will be seen at once that the worship of any other than God is meaningless and ridiculous. Shall we not take the hint and understand?

2042. Of all God's favours innumerable, His Mercy and Forgiveness in the spiritual plane is the greatest, and of eternal value to us in our future Lives.

19. And God doth know  
What ye conceal,  
And what ye reveal.

١٩- وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْشِرُونَ  
وَمَا تُكْفِرُونَ ○

20. Those whom they invoke  
Besides God create nothing  
And are themselves created.<sup>2043</sup>

٢٠- وَالَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ لَا  
يَخْلُقُونَ شَيْئًا وَهُمْ يُخْلَقُونَ ○

21. (They are things) dead,  
Lifeless: nor do they know  
When they will be raised up.<sup>2044</sup>

٢١- أَمْوَاتٌ غَيْرُ أَحْيَاءٍ  
وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ أَيَّانَ يُبْعَثُونَ ۚ

### SECTION 3.

22. **V**our God is One God:  
As to those who believe not  
In the Hereafter, their hearts  
Refuse to know, and they  
Are arrogant.<sup>2045</sup>

٢٢- إِلَهُكُمْ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ  
فَالَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ قُلُوبُهُمْ  
مُنْكَرَةٌ ۖ وَهُمْ مُسْتَكْبِرُونَ ○

23. Undoubtedly God doth know  
What they conceal,  
And what they reveal:<sup>2046</sup>  
Verily He loveth not the arrogant.

٢٣- لَا جَرَمَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا يُبْشِرُونَ  
وَمَا يُكْفِرُونَ إِنَّهُ لَا يَحِبُّ الْمُسْتَكْبِرِينَ ○

24. When it is said to them,  
"What is it that your Lord<sup>2047</sup>

٢٤- وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ مَاذَا أُنْزِلَ رَبُّكُمْ

2043. God is the only Creator and the Ultimate Reality. Everything else is created by Him, and reflects His glory. How foolish then to worship any other than God!

2044. Idols are dead wood or stone. If men worship stars, or heroes, or prophets, or great men, they too have no life except that which was given by God. In themselves they are lifeless. If they worship figments of the imagination, they are reflections in a double degree, and have no life in themselves. All these things will be raised up on the Last Day, in order that false worshippers may be confronted with them. But they themselves cannot tell when that Day will be.

2045. Everything points to the One True Eternal God. If so, there is a Hereafter, for He has declared it. In so far as people do not believe this, the fault is in their Will: they do not wish to believe, and the motive behind is arrogance, the sin which brought about the fall of Iblis: ii. 34.

2046. Cf. xvi. 19, where the same words refer to man generally. Whether he conceals or reveals what is in his heart, God knows it, and as God is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful, His grace is available as His highest favour if man will take it. Here the reference is to those who "refuse to know", who reject God's guidance out of arrogance. God "loveth not the arrogant". Such men deprive themselves of God's grace.

2047. When the arrogant Unbelievers are referred to some definite argument or illustration from Scripture, they dismiss it contemptuously with the remark, "Tales of the ancients!" In this, they are not only playing with their own conscience, but misleading others, with perhaps less knowledge than themselves.

Has revealed?" they say,  
"Tales of the ancients!"

25. Let them bear, on the Day  
Of Judgment, their own burdens  
In full, and also (something)  
Of the burdens of those  
Without knowledge, whom they<sup>2048</sup>  
Misled. Alas, how grievous  
The burdens they will bear!

قَالُوا سَاطِرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ۝

۲۵- لِيَسْمَلُوا أَوْ أَرَاهُمْ كَامِلَةً يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ  
وَمِنْ أَوْدَارِ الَّذِينَ يَحْمِلُونَ بُحْرًا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ  
الْأَسَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ ۝

C. 124.—In all ages wicked men tried to plot  
(xvi. 26-50.) Against God's Way, but they never  
Succeeded, and were covered with shame  
In ways unexpected. The righteous  
See good in God's Word, and their goal  
Is the Good. Great Teachers were sent  
To all nations, to warn against Evil  
And guide to the Right. The penalty  
For evil comes in many unexpected  
Ways, for Evil is against Nature.  
And all Nature proclaims God's Glory  
And humbly serves Him, the Lord Supreme.

#### SECTION 4.

26. Those before them did also  
Plot (against God's Way):  
But God took their structures  
From their foundations, and the<sup>roof</sup>  
Fell down on them from above;  
And the Wrath seized them  
From directions they did not  
perceive.<sup>2049</sup>

۲۶- قَدْ مَكَرَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ  
فَأَنَّ اللَّهَ بُنِيَ لَهُمْ مِنَ الْقَوَاعِدِ  
فَقَرَعَ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّقْفَ مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ  
وَأَنَّ لَهُمُ الْعَذَابَ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا  
يَشْعُرُونَ ۝

27. Then, on the Day of Judgment,  
He will cover them

۲۷- ثُمَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يَخْرُجُ لَهُمْ

2048. Their responsibility or crime is twofold: (1) that they rejected God's Message, and (2) that they misled others. Their Penalty will also be double. In vi. 164, we are told that "no bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another". This is against the doctrine of vicarious atonement. Every man is responsible for his own sins: but the sin of misleading others is a sin of the misleader himself, and he must suffer the penalty for that also, without relieving those misled, of their responsibility.

2049. Evil will always devise plots against the men of God. So was it with Muṣṭafa, and so was it with the apostles before him. But the imposing structures which the ungodly build up (metaphorically) collapse at the Command of God, and they are often punished from quarters from which they least expected punishment. For example, the Quraish were confident in their numbers, their organisation, and their superior equipment. But on the field of Badr they collapsed where they expected victory.

With shame, and say:  
 "Where are My 'partners'  
 Concerning whom ye used  
 To dispute (with the godly)?"  
 Those endued with knowledge<sup>2050</sup>  
 Will say: "This Day, indeed,  
 Are the Unbelievers covered  
 With Shame and Misery,—

وَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ شَرَكَاؤُى الَّذِينَ  
 كُنْتُمْ تُشَاكِرُونَ فِيهِمْ  
 قَالَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ إِنَّ الْخِزْيَ الْيَوْمَ  
 وَالْشُّوْءَ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ ۝

28. "(Namely) those whose lives the  
 angels  
 Take in a state of wrong-doing  
 To their own souls,"<sup>2051</sup>  
 Then would they offer submission  
 (With the pretence), "We did<sup>2052</sup>  
 No evil (knowingly)." (The angels  
 Will reply), "Nay, but verily  
 God knoweth all that ye did;

الَّذِينَ تَتَوَفَّيْهُمْ الْمَلَائِكَةُ  
 ظَالِمِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ  
 فَأَلْقُوا السَّلَامَ مَا كُنَّا نَعْمَلُ مِنْ شَوْءٍ  
 بَلَى إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ  
 بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ۝

29. "So enter the gates of Hell,  
 To dwell therein.  
 Thus evil indeed  
 Is the abode of the arrogant."

۝ فَادْخُلُوا أَبْوَابَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا  
 فُلَيْسَ مَثْوًى الْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ ۝

30. To the righteous  
 (When) it is said, "What  
 Is it that your Lord<sup>2053</sup>  
 Has revealed?" they say,  
 "All that is good." To those  
 Who do good, there is good  
 In this world, and the Home  
 Of the Hereafter is even better.<sup>2054</sup>

۝ وَقِيلَ لِلَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا مَاذَا أَنْزَلَ رَبُّكُمْ  
 قَالُوا خَيْرٌ  
 الَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا فِي هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةٌ  
 وَلَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ خَيْرٌ

2050. The worshippers of false gods (the ungodly, the Unbelievers) will be unable to reply when brought before the Judgment Seat. The comment of those "endued with knowledge"—the Prophets and Teachers whom they had rejected—will be by way of indictment and explanation of the position of those before the Judgment Seat.

2051. That is, those who died in a state of *kufr*, or rebellion against God, which was really wrong-doing against their own souls.

2052. The excuse is a mere pretence. At first they were too dazed to reply. When they reply, they cannot deny the facts, but resort to the sinner's excuse of saying that they sinned through ignorance, and that their motives were not wrong. Such a plea raises a question of hidden thoughts which are difficult to appraise before a human tribunal. But here they are before their Divine Author, Who knows every secret of their souls, and before Whom no false plea can be of any value. So they are condemned.

2053. The contrast and parallelism is with xvi. 24, where the ungodly in their levity and their deliberate rejection of guidance find no profit from God's revelation.

2054. Unlike the ungodly, the good find good everywhere,—in this world and in the Hereafter; because they understand and are in accord with the truths around them.



And excellent indeed is the Home  
Of the righteous,—

31. Gardens of Eternity, which they  
Will enter : beneath them  
Flow (pleasant) rivers : they  
Will have therein all  
That they wish : thus doth  
God reward the righteous,—

32. (Namely) those whose lives  
The angels take in a state<sup>2055</sup>  
Of purity, saying (to them),  
"Peace be on you ; enter ye  
The Garden, because of (the good)  
Which ye did (in the world)."

33. Do the (ungodly) wait until  
The angels come to them,  
Or there comes the Command  
Of thy Lord (for their doom) ?<sup>2056</sup>  
So did those who went  
Before them. But God :  
Wronged them not : nay,  
They wronged their own souls.

34. But the evil results  
Of their deeds overtook them,  
And that very (Wrath)  
At which they had scoffed  
Hemmed them in.

#### SECTION 5.

35. The worshippers of false gods  
Say : "If God had so willed,  
We should not have worshipped  
Aught but Him—neither we<sup>2057</sup>

وَلَنِعْمَ دَارُ الْمُتَّقِينَ ۝

۳۱- جَنَّاتٌ عَدْنٌ يَدْخُلُونَهَا يُجْرَى مِنْ  
تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ لَهُمْ فِيهَا مَا يَشَاءُونَ  
كَذَلِكَ يَجْزِي اللَّهُ الْمُتَّقِينَ ۝

۳۲- الَّذِينَ تَتَوَفَّيْهُمْ الْمَلَائِكَةُ طَيِّبِينَ  
يَقُولُونَ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ ادْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ  
بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ۝

۳۳- هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ تَأْتِيَهُمُ  
الْمَلَائِكَةُ أَوْ يَأْتِيَ أَمْرٌ مِنْ رَبِّكَ  
كَذَلِكَ فَعَلَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ وَمَا ظَنَّهُمْ  
لِلَّهِ وَلَكِنْ كَانُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ ۝

۳۴- فَأَصَابَهُمْ سَيِّئَاتُ مَا عَمِلُوا  
وَحَاقَ بِهِمْ  
فَمَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِءُونَ ۝

۳۵- وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا لَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ  
مَا عَبَدْنَاكُمْ نَا مِنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ وَنَحْنُ

2055. In a state of purity : from the evils of this world, from want of faith and want of grace. Purity from such evil is the mark of true Islam, and those who die in such purity will be received into Felicity with a salutation of Peace.

2056. That is, until death comes to them, or some Punishment in this life itself, which precludes them from repentance and the Mercy of God.

2057. The old, old argument : if God is All-Powerful, why did He not force all persons to His Will? This ignores the limited Free-will granted to man, which is the whole basis of Ethics. God gives man every opportunity of knowing and understanding things, but He does not force him, for that would be against the whole Plan on which our present Life is constituted.

Nor our fathers,—nor should  
We have prescribed

Other than His.” prohibitions<sup>2058</sup>  
So did those  
Who went before them.  
But what is the mission  
Of apostles but to preach  
The Clear Message? <sup>2059</sup>

36. For We assuredly sent  
Amongst every People an

apostle,<sup>2060</sup>  
(With the Command), “Serve  
God, and eschew Evil”:  
Of the people were some whom  
God guided, and some  
On whom Error became<sup>2061</sup>  
Inevitably (established). So travel  
Through the earth, and see  
What was the end of those  
Who denied (the Truth).

37. If thou art anxious  
For their guidance, yet  
God guideth not such  
As He leaves to stray,<sup>2062</sup>  
And there is none  
To help them.

38. They swear their strongest  
oaths<sup>2063</sup>  
By God, that God will not

وَلَا آبَاؤُنَا وَلَا  
حُكُمْنَا مِنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ  
كَذَلِكَ فَعَلَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ  
فَهَلْ عَلَى الرَّسُولِ إِلَّا الْبَلَاغَةُ الْمُبِينُ ○

٣٦- وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولًا  
أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ  
فَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ هَدَى اللَّهُ  
وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ حَقَّتْ عَلَيْهِ الضَّلَالَةُ  
فَاسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ  
فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكَذِّبِينَ ○

٣٧- إِنْ تَخُوضْ عَلَى هُدَاهُمْ  
فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي مَنْ يُضِلُّ  
وَمَا لَهُمْ مِنْ نَاصِرِينَ ○

٣٨- وَأَقْسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ جَهْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ

2058. The Pagan Arabs prescribed various arbitrary prohibitions in the matter of meat : see vi. 143-145. These, of course, are not recognised by Islam, which also removed some of the restrictions of the Jewish Law : vi 146 The general meaning, however, is far wider. Men erect their own taboos and prohibitions, barriers and restrictions, and ascribe them to Religion. This is wrong, and more consonant with Pagan practice than with Islam.

2059. *Clear Message : Mubin* : in three senses : (1) a Message clear and unambiguous ; (2) one that makes all things clear to those who try to understand, because it accords with their own nature as created by God ; (3) one preached openly and to every one.

2060. Even though God's Signs are everywhere in Nature and in men's own conscience, yet in addition God has sent human Messengers to every People to call their attention to the Good and turn them from Evil. So they cannot pretend that God has abandoned them or that He does not care what they do. His divine Grace always invites their will to choose the right.

2061. While some people accept the guidance of the divine Grace, others so surrender themselves to Evil that it must necessarily follow that Evil obtains a grip over them. They have only to travel through Time or Space to see the end of those who abandoned their lights and surrendered to Evil and Error. For *haqqat* and the meaning of *haqq* in this connection cf. xv. 64.

2062. When once God's Grace is rejected by any one, such a person loses all help and guidance. Such persons are then outside God's Grace, and therefore they are outside guidance.

2063. The strongest oath of the Pagan Arabs would be by the Supreme God : less strong oaths would be by their subordinate deities, or their ancestors, or other things they valued or held sacred.

Raise up those who die:<sup>2064</sup>  
Nay, but it is a promise  
(Binding) on Him in truth:  
But most among mankind  
Realise it not.

39. (They must be raised up),  
In order that He may manifest  
To them the truth of that  
Wherein they differ, and that  
The rejecters of Truth  
May realise that they had  
Indeed (surrendered to)  
Falsehood.<sup>2065</sup>

40. For to anything which We  
Have willed, We but say  
The Word, "Be", and it is.<sup>2066</sup>

#### SECTION 6.

41. ~~قُلْ~~ O those who leave  
Their homes in the cause  
Of God, after suffering  
oppression, —<sup>2067</sup>  
We will assuredly give  
A goodly home in this world;  
But truly the reward  
Of the Hereafter will be greater.  
If they only realised (this)!

42. (They are) those who persevere  
In patience, and put  
Their trust on their Lord.

يَبْعَثُ اللَّهُ مَن يَمُوتُ  
بَلَى وَعْدًا عَلَيْهِ حَقًّا  
وَلَكِن أَكْثَر النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ۝

٣٩-لِيُبَيِّنَ لَهُمُ الْآيَاتِ  
يَخْتَلِفُونَ فِيهِ  
وَلِيَعْلَمَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا  
أَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا كَذِبِينَ ۝

٤٠-إِنَّمَا قَوْلُنَا لِشَيْءٍ إِذَا أَرَدْنَا أَن  
نَقُولَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ ۝

٤١-وَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا فِي اللَّهِ  
مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا ظَلَمُوا  
لَنُكَفِّرَنَّ لَهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً  
وَلَنُكَفِّرَنَّ لَهُمُ الْآخِرَةَ أَكْبَرُ  
لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ ۝

٤٢-الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا وَعَلَى رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ

2064. The usual Pagan creed is: 'If there is a God, it does not follow that He will raise us up: why should He?' The answer is twofold: (1) God has promised it, and God's promise is true; (2) He must finally manifest the Truth to them, convict them of their falsehood, and enforce their personal responsibility (xvi. 39).

2065. See the last note.

2066. God's "Word" is in itself the Deed. God's Promise is in itself the Truth. There is no interposition of Time or Condition between His Will and its consequences, for He is the Ultimate Reality. He is independent of the proximate or material causes, for He Himself creates them and establishes their Laws as He pleases.

2067. There is no merit in suffering exile (*hijrat*) in itself. To have any merit, it must be: (1) in the cause of God, and (2) after such an oppression as forces the sufferer to choose between God and man. When these conditions are fulfilled, the exiles are entitled to the highest honour, as having made a great sacrifice in the cause of God. Such were the early Muslim exiles to Abyssinia; such were the later exiles to Medina, before the Apostle himself left his home in Mecca and went to Medina; and such were the exiles who went with the Prophet or followed him. At all these stages, his approval or advice was always obtained, either specifically or generally.

43. And before thee also  
The apostles we sent  
Were but men,<sup>2068</sup> to whom  
We granted inspiration: if ye  
Realise this not, ask of those<sup>2069</sup>  
Who possess the Message.

٢٣- وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ  
إِلَّا رِجَالًا نُوْحِي إِلَيْهِمْ فَهُمْ أَهْلُ  
الذِّكْرِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ۝

44. (We sent them) with Clear Signs  
And Books of dark prophecies;<sup>2070</sup>  
And We have sent down  
Unto thee (also) the Message;  
That thou mayest explain clearly  
To men what is sent  
For them, and that they  
May give thought.

٢٤- بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالزُّبُرِ  
وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ  
مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ  
وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ۝

45. So then those who devise  
Evil (plots) feel secure  
That God will not cause  
The earth to swallow them up,  
Or that the Wrath will not  
Seize them from directions  
They little perceive?—<sup>2071</sup>

٢٥- أَفَأَمِنَ الَّذِينَ مَكَرُوا السَّيِّئَاتِ  
أَنْ يَخْسِفَ اللَّهُ بِهِمُ الْأَرْضَ  
أَوْ يَأْتِيَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ  
مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ۝  
٢٦- أَوْ يَأْخُذَهُمْ

46. Or that He may not  
Call them to account

2068. God's apostles were always men, not angels; and their distinction was the inspiration they received.

2069. If the Pagan Arabs, who were ignorant of religious and other history, wondered how a man from among themselves could receive inspiration and bring a Message from God, let them ask the Jews, who had also received God's Message earlier through Moses, whether Moses was a man, or an angel, or a god. They would learn that Moses was a man like themselves, but inspired by God. "Those who possess the Message" may also mean any men of Wisdom, who were qualified to have an opinion in such matters.

2070. For "Clear Signs" see n. 401 to iii. 62. For *Zubur* (Books of dark prophecies), see iii. 184, and n. 490). As the People of the Book had received "Clear Signs" and inspired Books before, so also God's Message came to the Prophet Muḥammad through the Qur-ān, which superseded the earlier revelations, already corrupted in the hands of their followers.

2071. Cf. xvi. 26. The wicked plot against men of God in secret, forgetting that every hidden thought of theirs is known to God, and that for every thought and action of theirs they will have to account to God. And God's punishment can seize them in various ways. Four are enumerated here. (1) They may be swallowed up in the earth like Qārūn, whose story is told in xxviii. 76-81. He was swallowed up in the earth while he was arrogantly exulting on the score of his wealth. (2) It may be that, like Hāmān, the prime minister of Pharaoh, they are plotting against God, when they are themselves overwhelmed by some dreadful calamity: xl. 36-38; xxix. 39-40. The case of Pharaoh is also in point. He was drowned while he was arrogantly hoping to frustrate God's plans for Israel: x. 90-92. For (3) and (4) see the next two notes.

In the midst of their goings<sup>2072</sup>  
To and fro, without a chance  
Of their frustrating Him?—

فِي تَقْلِيدِهِمْ فَمَا هُمْ بِمُعْجِزِينَ ۝

47. Or that He may not  
Call them to account  
By a process of slow wastage—<sup>2073</sup>  
For thy Lord is indeed  
Full of kindness and mercy.

۝ أَوْ يَأْخُذْهُمْ عَلَى تَخَوُّفٍ  
فَإِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ لَشَدِيدٌ رَحِيمٌ ۝

48. Do they not look  
At God's creation, (even)  
Among (inanimate) things,—<sup>2074</sup>  
How their (very) shadows  
Turn round, from the right  
And the left, prostrating  
Themselves to God, and that  
In the humblest manner?

۝ أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا إِلَى مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ  
يَتَفَعَّلُونَ فِيهِ ظِلُّهُ  
عَنِ الْيَمِينِ وَالشَّمَائِلِ سُجَّدًا لِلَّهِ  
وَهُمْ ذَاخِرُونَ ۝

49. And to God doth obeisance  
All that is in the heavens  
And on earth, whether  
Moving (living) creatures<sup>2075</sup>  
Or the angels: for none  
Are arrogant (before their Lord).

۝ وَلِلَّهِ يَسْجُدُ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي  
الْاَرْضِ مِنْ ذٰلِبَاتٍ وَالْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ  
وَهُمْ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ ۝

2072. (3) Or the punishment may come to people away from their homes and humble them in their pride. It so happened to Abū Jahl, who came exulting in his pride to the Battle of Badr (A.H. 2). His army was three times the size of the Muslim army from Medina. But it suffered a crushing defeat, and he himself was ignominiously slain.

2073. (4) Or, as often happens, the punishment comes slowly and imperceptibly, the power of the enemies of God being wasted gradually, until it is extinguished. This happened to the Meccans during the eight years of the Prophet's exile. The re-conquest of Mecca was bloodless, because the power of the enemy had gradually vanished. The Prophet was thus able to show the unexampled generosity and clemency which he showed on that occasion, for two of God's attributes are expressed in the titles "Full of kindness" (*Ra-ūf*) and "Full of mercy" (*Raḥīm*).

2074. I take "things" here to be inanimate things, for the next verse speaks of living "moving creatures" and angels. By a metaphor even such inanimate things are spoken of as recognising God and humbly worshipping Him. Even their shadows turn round from right and left according to the light from above, and they humbly prostrate themselves on the ground to celebrate the praises of God. The "shadows" suggest how all things in this life are mere shadows of the true Reality in heaven; and they should turn and move in accordance with the divine light, as the shadows of trees and buildings move in one direction or another, and lengthen or shorten according to the light from heaven.

2075. *Moving creatures, i.e., living creatures.* "All that is in the heavens or earth," includes every created thing. And created things are mentioned in three classes: inanimate things, ordinary living things, and angels. Even the highest angels are not arrogant; they bow down and serve their Lord, and so does all Creation.

50. They all revere their Lord,<sup>2076</sup>  
High above them, and they do  
All that they are commanded.

هـ-يَخَافُونَ رَبَّهُمْ مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ  
وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمَرُونَ

- C. 125.—There is but One God, He Who gives  
(xvi. 51-83.) All blessings to man and other creatures.  
His greatest gift is that He reveals  
Himself. But in many tangible ways  
He cares for man and provides for his growth  
And sustenance. In rain, and milk,  
In fruits and honey, and in Nature and the life  
Of man, with his opportunities  
Of social, moral, and spiritual growth,  
Are Signs for those who understand.  
Why then does man show ingratitude  
By going after false gods and forgetting God ?

#### SECTION 7.

51. God has said: "Take not  
(For worship) two gods:<sup>2077</sup>  
For He is just One God:  
Then fear Me (and Me alone)."

هـ-وَقَالَ اللَّهُ لَا تَتَّخِذُوا إِلَهَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ  
إِنَّمَا هُوَ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ فَإِذَا تَايَ فَارَهُبُونَ

52. To Him belongs whatever  
Is in the heavens and on earth,  
And to Him is duty due always:  
Then will ye fear other<sup>2078</sup>  
Than God ?

هـ-وَلَهُ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ  
وَلَهُ الدِّينُ وَاٰصْبٰٓءُ  
اَفَعٰذِرُ اللّٰهُ تَتَّقُونَ

53. And ye have no good thing  
But is from God: and moreover,  
When ye are touched by distress,  
Unto Him ye cry with groans;<sup>2079</sup>

هـ-وَمَا يَكُمُ مِنْ نِعْمَةٍ مِنَ اللّٰهِ ثُمَّ  
اِذَا مَسَّكُمُ الضَّرُّ فَاَلَمْتُمْ فَتَبْتَغُونَ

2076. God is so high above the highest of His creatures, that they all look up to him in awe and reverence. And they joyfully do their duty in serving Him. This is the meaning of the "fear of the Lord."

2077. The ancient Persians believed in two powers in the Universe, one good and the other evil. The Pagan Arabs also had pairs of deities: e.g. *Jibt* (Sorcery) and *Tāgūt* (Evil), referred to in iv. 51, n. 573, or the idols on Šafā and Marwa referred to in n. 160 to ii. 158: their names were Isāf and Nāila.

2078. The Pagans might have a glimmering of the One True God, but they had also a haunting fear of malevolent Powers of Evil. They are told that such fears are groundless. Evil has no power over those who trust in God: xv. 42. The only fear they should have is that of the Wrath of God. To the righteous all good things come from God, and they have no fear in their hearts.

2079. Which shows that the natural tendency of man is to seek God, the only Power which can truly relieve distress.

54. Yet, when He removes  
The distress from you, behold!  
Some of you turn to other gods  
To join with their Lord—
55. (As if) to show their ingratitude  
For the favours We have  
Bestowed on them! Then enjoy  
(Your brief day); but soon  
Will ye know (your folly)!
56. And they (even) assign,  
To things they do not know,<sup>2080</sup>  
A portion out of that  
Which We have bestowed  
For their sustenance!<sup>2081</sup>  
By God, ye shall certainly  
Be called to account  
For your false inventions.
57. ~~And~~ And they assign daughters<sup>2082</sup>  
For God!—Glory be to Him!—  
And for themselves (sons,—  
The issue) they desire!
58. When news is brought  
To one of them, of (the birth  
Of) a female (child), his face  
Darkens, and he is filled  
With inward grief!
59. With shame does he hide  
Himself from his people,

٥٤- ثُمَّ إِذَا كُشِفَ الضَّرْعُ عَنْكُمْ  
إِذَا فَرِيقٌ مِنْكُمْ بِرَبِّهِمْ يُشْرِكُونَ ۝

٥٥- لِيَكْفُرُوا بِمَا آتَيْنَاهُمْ  
فَمَا تَتَعَوَّاهُمْ فَأَنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُونَ ۝

٥٦- وَيَجْعَلُونَ لِمَا لَا يَمْلِكُونَ  
تَصْنِيفًا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ  
ثَالِثًا ۚ لَنَسْأَلَنَّهُ  
عَمَّا كُنْتُمْ تَفْتَرُونَ ۝

٥٧- وَيَجْعَلُونَ لِلَّهِ الْبَنَاتِ سُبْحَانَهُ  
وَلَهُمْ مَا يَشْتَهُونَ ۝

٥٨- وَإِذَا بُشِّرَ أَحَدُهُم بِالْأُنثَىٰ  
ظَلَّ وَجْهُهُ مُسْوَدًّا وَهُوَ كَظِيمٌ ۝

٥٩- يَتَوَارَىٰ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ مِنْ سُوءِ

2080. Idols and fictitious gods are certainly things of which they have no knowledge, idols being lifeless things of whose life or doings no knowledge is possible, and fictitious gods being but figments of their imagination.

2081. Cf. vi. 136—140, 142—144, and v. 106. The Pagans, in assigning and dedicating some of their children, or some of their cattle, or some of the produce of their fields, to their false gods as sharers with the true Supreme God, made themselves doubly ridiculous; first, because every good thing that they valued was given to them by God, and how could they patronisingly assign to Him a share of His own gifts?—and secondly, because they brought in other gods as sharers, who had no existence whatever! Besides, the cattle and produce was given for their physical sustenance and the children for their social and spiritual sustenance, and how can they, poor creatures, give sustenance to God?

2082. Some of the Pagan Arabs called angels the daughters of God. In their own life they hated to have daughters, as explained in the next two verses. They practised female infanticide. In their state of perpetual war sons were a source of strength to them; daughters only made them subject to humiliating raids!

Because of the bad news  
He has had!  
Shall he retain it <sup>2083</sup>  
On (sufferance and) contempt,  
Or bury it in the dust? <sup>2084</sup>  
Ah! what an evil (choice)  
They decide on? <sup>2085</sup>

60. To those who believe not  
In the Hereafter, applies  
The similitude of evil:  
To God applies the highest <sup>2086</sup>  
Similitude: for He is  
The Exalted in Power,  
Full of Wisdom.

### SECTION 8.

61. If God were to punish  
Men for their wrong-doing,  
He would not leave, on the (earth),  
A single living creature:  
But He gives them respite  
For a stated Term:  
When their Term expires,  
They would not be able  
To delay (the punishment)  
For a single hour, just as  
They would not be able  
To anticipate it (for a single  
hour). <sup>2087</sup>

مَا بَشِّرْهُ  
أَيُسْكُهُ عَلَى هُونٍ  
أَمْ يَدُسُّهُ فِي التُّرَابِ  
أَلَا سَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ ○

٦٠- لِلَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ  
مَثَلُ الشَّوْرِ وَلِلَّهِ الْمَثَلُ الْأَعْلَى  
وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ○

٦١- وَلَوْ يُؤَاخِذُ اللَّهُ النَّاسَ بِظُلْمِهِمْ  
مَا تَرَكَ عَلَيْهَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ  
وَلَكِنْ يُؤَخِّرُهُمْ إِلَى أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى  
فَإِذَا جَاءَ أَجَلُهُمْ لَا يَسْتَأْخِرُونَ  
سَاعَةً وَ  
لَا يَسْتَقْدِرُونَ ○

2083. "It," in this and the following clause, refers grammatically to the "news" (*mā bushshira bihi*). In meaning it refers to the "female child"—by the figure of speech known as metonymy.

2084. Cf. lxxx. 8-9. The practice of female infanticide is condemned in scathing terms. Female children used to be buried alive by the Pagan Arabs.

2085. It was an evil choice to decide on. Either alternative—to keep the poor girl as a thing of sufferance and contempt, bringing disgrace on the family, or to get rid of it by burying it alive—was cruel and indefensible.

2086. Cf. xxx. 27. God is above all comparison. But if, for our own understanding, we use any similitudes at all, the highest and noblest would be for God, and the vilest for the Unbelievers, for they deny their own nature. The Pagans reversed this process, and attributed daughters to God, when they considered daughters a sign of shame and ignominy to themselves!

2087. God's decree works without fail. If He were to punish for every wrong or shortcoming, not a single living creature on earth would escape punishment. But in His infinite mercy and forgiveness, He gives respite: He provides time for repentance. If the repentance is forthcoming, God's Mercy is forthcoming without fail. If not, the punishment comes inevitably on the expiry of the Term. The sinner cannot anticipate it by an insolent challenge, nor can he delay it when the time arrives. Let him not think that the respite given him may mean that he can do what he likes, and that he can escape scot-free from the consequences.



62. They attribute to God  
What they hate

(for themselves),<sup>2088</sup>  
And their tongues assert  
The falsehood that all good  
things<sup>2089</sup>

Are for themselves: without doubt  
For them is the Fire, and they  
Will be the first to be  
Hastened on into it!

٦٢- وَيَجْعَلُونَ لِلّٰهِ مَا يَكْفُرُونَ  
وَتَصِفُ أَلْسِنَتُهُمُ الْكَذِبَ أَنَّ لَهُمُ  
الْحُسْنٰى  
لَا جَزْمَ اَنَّ لَهُمُ النَّارَ  
وَآلَهُمْ مُّغْرَضُونَ ۝

63. By God, We (also) sent  
(Our apostles) to Peoples  
Before thee; but Satan  
Made, (to the wicked),  
Their own acts seem alluring:  
He is also their patron to-day,<sup>2090</sup>  
But they shall have  
A most grievous penalty.

٦٣- تَاللّٰهِ لَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا اِلٰى اُمَمٍ  
مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ فَزَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ اَعْمَالَهُمْ  
فَهُمْ لِيَوْمِهِمْ يٰئِسُوْا  
وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ۝

64. And We sent down the Book  
To thee for the express purpose,  
That thou shouldst make clear  
To them those things in which<sup>2091</sup>  
They differ, and that it should be  
A guide and a mercy  
To those who believe.

٦٤- وَمَا اَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتٰبَ  
اِلَّا لِتُبَيِّنَ لَهُمُ الَّذِى اخْتَلَفُوْا فِيْهِ  
وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً  
لِّقَوْمٍ يُّزَوِّنُوْنَ ۝

65. And God sends down rain  
From the skies, and gives  
Life to the earth after its death:  
Verily in this is a Sign

٦٥- وَاللّٰهُ اَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَآءً فَاحْيَا بِهِ  
الْاَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً

2088. See above, xvi. 57-58 and notes.

2089. The philosophy of Pleasure (Hedonism) assumes that worldly enjoyment is good in itself and that there is nothing beyond. But it can be shown, even on its own ground, that every act has its inevitable consequences. No Good can spring out of Evil. For falsehood and wrong the agony of the Fire is waiting, and the boastful votaries of Falsehood will be the first to fall into it.

2090. In all ages and among all Peoples God sent His Messengers to teach the Truth and point the way to righteousness. But the allurements of Evil seemed always attractive, and many men preferred their own ways and the ways of their ancestors to the more difficult path of rectitude. This happened again in the time of Muṣṭafā, and will always happen as long as men succumb to Evil.

2091. But the path of duty before God's Messenger is clear. He is sent with the Revelation (the Qur-ān) for three express purposes: (1) that he should bring about unity among the jarring sects, for the Gospel of Unity, while preaching the One True God, leads also to the unity of mankind; (2) that the revelation should be a guide to right conduct; and (3) that it should show the path of repentance and salvation, and thus be the highest mercy to erring sinners.

For those who listen.<sup>2092</sup>

### SECTION 9.

66. And verily in cattle (too)  
Will ye find an instructive

Sign.<sup>2093</sup>

From what is within their

bodies,<sup>2094</sup>

Between excretions and blood,<sup>2095</sup>  
We produce, for your drink,  
Milk, pure and agreeable  
To those who drink it.

67. And from the fruit  
Of the date-palm and the vine,  
Ye get out wholesome drink<sup>2096</sup>  
And food: behold, in this  
Also is a Sign  
For those who are wise.

لَقَوْمٍ يُسْمَعُونَ ٥

٦٦- وَإِنَّ لَكُمْ فِي الْأَنْعَامِ لَعِبْرَةً  
نُسْقِيكُمْ مِمَّا فِي بُطُونِهِمْ مِنْ بَيْنِ فَرْثٍ  
وَدَمٍ  
لَهُنَا خَالِصًا سَائِغًا  
لِلشَّارِبِينَ ٥

٦٧- وَمِنْ ثَمَرَاتِ النَّخِيلِ وَالْأَعْنَابِ  
تَتَّخِذُونَ مِنْهُ سَكَرًا وَرِزْقًا حَسَنًا  
إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ٥

2092. When the earth and all its vegetation is well-nigh dead, parched and shrivelled up, a vivifying shower of rain from above gives it new life. This is a Sign or Emblem of spiritual life. When sin well-nigh kills the soul, the fertilising shower of God's Revelation from above puts new life into it.

2093. The spiritual sustenance which God gives is typified by the wonderful ways of sustenance in the physical world, which figure forth God's providence and loving care for His creation. And the wonderful transformations in the physical world, which all tend to the benefit of man, are also Signs of His supreme wisdom. In the previous verse rain was mentioned, which gives new life to dead nature. In this and the following two verses our attention is drawn to milk, the products of the date and the vine, and honey.

2094. *Their*: in the Arabic, it is "its", in the singular number, for two reasons: (1) cattle is the generic plural, and may be treated as a singular noun; (2) the instructive Sign is in cattle collectively, but the milk is the product of each single individual.

2095. Milk is a secretion in the female body, like other secretions, but more specialised. Is it not wonderful that the same food, eaten by males and females, produces in the latter, when they have young, the wholesome and complete food, known as milk? Then, when cattle are tamed and specially bred for milk, the supply of milk is vastly greater than is necessary for their young and lasts for a longer time than during the period they give suck to their young. And it is a wholesome and agreeable diet for man. It is pure, as typified by its whiteness. Yet it is a secretion like other secretions, between the excretions which the body rejects as worthless and the precious blood-stream which circulates within the body and is the symbol of life itself to the animal which produces it.

2096. There are wholesome drinks and foods that can be got out of the date-palm and the vine: e.g., non-alcoholic drinks from the date and the grape, vinegar, date-sugar, grape-sugar, and dates and grapes themselves for eating. If *sakar* must be taken in the sense of fermented wine, it refers to the time before intoxicants were prohibited: this is a Meccan Sūra and the prohibition came in Medina.

68. And thy Lord taught the Bee<sup>2097</sup>  
To build its cells in hills,  
On trees, and in (men's) habitations;

69. Then to eat of all  
The produce (of the earth),<sup>2098</sup>  
And find with skill the spacious<sup>2099</sup>  
Paths of its Lord: there issues  
From within their bodies  
A drink of varying colours,  
Wherein is healing for men:  
Verily in this is a Sign  
For those who give thought.

70. It is God Who creates you  
And takes your souls at death;  
And of you there are  
Some who are sent back  
To a feeble age, so that<sup>2100</sup>  
They know nothing after  
Having known (much):  
For God is All-Knowing,<sup>2101</sup>  
All-Powerful.

٦٨- وَأَوْحَىٰ رَبُّكَ إِلَى النَّحْلِ أَنِ اتَّخِذِي  
مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوتًا وَمِنَ الشَّجَرِ وَمِمَّا يَعْرِشُونَ

٦٩- ثُمَّ كُلِي مِن كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ  
فَاسْلُكِي سُبُلَ رَبِّكِ ذُلُلًا  
يَخْرُجُ مِنْ بَطُونِهِنَّ شَرَابٌ  
مُتَّعِلِفٌ أَلْوَانٌ فِيهِ شِفَاءٌ لِلنَّاسِ  
إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

٧٠- وَاللَّهُ خَلَقَكُمْ ثُمَّ يَرْجِعُكُمْ  
وَمِنْكُمْ مَنْ يُرَدُّ إِلَىٰ أَرْدَلٍ الْعُمُرِ  
لَكِنِّي لَا يَعْلمُ بَعْدَ عِلْمٍ شَيْئًا  
إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ قَدِيرٌ

2097. *Auḥā*: *waḥyūn* ordinarily means inspiration, the Message put into the mind or heart by God. Here the Bee's instinct is referred to God's teaching, which it undoubtedly is. In xcix. 5, it is applied to the earth: we shall discuss the precise meaning when we come to that passage. The honey-comb, itself, with its hexagonal cells, geometrically perfect, is a wonderful structure, and is well called *bayūt*, homes. And the way the bee finds out inaccessible places, in the hills, in the trees, and even among the habitations of men, is one of the marvels of nature, i.e., of God's working in His Creation.

2098. The bee assimilates the juice of various kinds of flowers and fruit, and forms within its body the honey which it stores in its cells of wax. The different kinds of food from which it makes its honey give different colours to the honey, e.g., it is dark-brown, light-brown, yellow, white, and so on. The taste and flavour also varies, as in the case of heather honey, the honey formed from scented flowers, and so on. As food it is sweet and wholesome, and it is used in medicine. Note that while the instinctive individual acts are described in the singular number, the produce of "their bodies" is described in the plural, as the result of their collective effort.

2099. *Zululan*: two meanings are possible: (1) ways easy and spacious, referring to the unerring way in which bees find their way from long distances to their combs; and (2) the idea of humility and obedience in them. From both we can derive a metaphorical and spiritual meaning.

2100. Besides the mystery and beauty of the many processes going on in the working of God's Creation, there is the wonderful life of man himself on this earth: how he is created as a child; how he grows in intelligence and knowledge; and how his soul is taken back and his body suffers dissolution. In some cases he lives so long that he falls into a feeble old age like a second childhood: he forgets what he learnt and seems almost to go back in Time. Is not all this wonderful, and evidence of the knowledge and Power of God?

2101. Our attention having been called to the remarkable transformations in life and nature, by which the knowledge and Power of God work out His beneficent Plan for His creatures, we are reminded that man at best is but a feeble creature, but for the grace of God. We then pass on in the next Section to the differences in the gifts which men themselves enjoy, distinguishing them into so many categories. How much greater is the difference between the created things and their Creator?

## SECTION 10.

71. God has bestowed His gifts  
Of sustenance more freely on some  
Of you than on others: those  
More favoured are not going  
To throw back their gifts  
To those whom their right hands  
Possess, so as to be equal  
In that respect. Will they then  
Deny the favours of God? <sup>2102</sup>

٤١- وَاللّٰهُ فَضَّلَ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ فِي  
الزَّيْقِ ۖ فَمَّا الَّذِينَ فَضَّلُوا بَرَأْدِي رَزَقْتُهُمْ  
عَلَىٰ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ  
فَهُمْ فِيهِ سَوَاءٌ

أَفِيْنَعَمَةِ اللّٰهِ يَجْحَدُونَ ۝

72. And God has made for you  
Mates (and Companions) of your  
own nature, <sup>2103</sup>  
And made for you, out of them,  
Sons and daughters and  
grandchildren, <sup>2104</sup>  
And provided for you sustenance  
Of the best: will they  
Then believe in vain things,  
And be ungrateful for God's  
favours?—

٤٢- وَاللّٰهُ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا  
وَجَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَزْوَاجِكُمْ بَنِينَ وَحَفَدًا  
وَرَزَقَكُمْ مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ  
أَفَمَا لَبَأَطِلُ يُؤْمِنُونَ  
وَبِنِعْمَةِ اللّٰهِ هُمْ يَكْفُرُونَ ۝

73. And worship others than God,—  
Such as have no power  
Of providing them, for  
sustenance, <sup>2105</sup>

٤٣- وَيَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللّٰهِ  
مَا لَا يَمْلِكُ لَهُمْ رِزْقًا

2102. Even in the little differences in gifts, which men enjoy from God, men with superior gifts are not going to abandon them so as to be equal with men of inferior gifts, whom, perhaps, they hold in subjection. They will never deny their own superiority. How then (as the argument is pursued in the two following verses), can they ignore the immense difference between the Creator and created things, and make the latter, in their thoughts, partners with God?

2103. *Of your nature*: or of yourselves. Cf. iv. 1 and n. 504. Self, or Personality, or Soul, all imply a bundle of attributes, capacities, predilections, and dispositions, which we may sum up in the word *Nafs*, or nature. Woman was made to be (1) a mate or companion for man; (2) except for sex, of the same nature as man, and therefore, with the same moral and religious rights and duties; and (3) she is not to be considered a source of all evil or sin, as the Christian monks characterised her, but rather as a blessing, one of the favours (*Ni'mat*) of God.

2104. *Hafadat*: collective plural, daughters, grandchildren, and descendants. The root *hafada* also implies obedient service and ministrations. Just as the sons (first mentioned) should be a source of strength, so daughters and grandchildren should serve and contribute to the happiness of fathers and grandparents, and are to be looked upon as further blessings.

2105. "Sustenance" (*rizq*) in all this passage (xvi. 65-74), as elsewhere, implies all that is necessary for man's life and growth, physical, mental, moral, and spiritual. Milk, fruit, and honey are examples of physical gifts, with a metaphorical reference to mental and moral health; family life is an example of moral and social and (ultimately) spiritual opportunities in the life of man; and in xvi. 65 is an example of rain in the physical world as a type of God's revelation in the spiritual world.

With anything in heavens or earth,  
And cannot possibly have  
Such power?

74. Invent not similitudes<sup>2106</sup>  
For God: for God knoweth,  
And ye know not.

75. God sets forth the Parable  
(Of two men: one) a slave  
Under the dominion of  
another;<sup>2107</sup>  
He has no power of any sort;  
And (the other) a man  
On whom We have bestowed  
Goodly favours from Ourselves,  
And he spends thereof (freely),  
Privately and publicly:  
Are the two equal?  
(By no means;)  
Praise be to God. But  
Most of them understand not.

76. God sets forth (another) Parable  
Of two men: one of them  
Dumb, with no power  
Of any sort; a wearisome burden  
Is he to his master;  
Whichever way he directs him,  
He brings no good:<sup>2108</sup>  
Is such a man equal  
With one who commands

مِّنَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ شَيْئًا  
وَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُوْنَ ۝

٧٤- فَلَا تَضْرِبُوْا لِلّٰهِ اَمْثَالَ  
اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَعْلَمُ وَاَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ۝

٧٥- ضَرَبَ اللّٰهُ مَثَلًا عَبْدًا  
مَّن لَّوْكَ اَلَّا يَقْدِرُ عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ  
وَمَنْ زَكَّرْنٰهُ وَاٰتَيْنٰهُ مَا حَسَنًا  
فَلَهُ يَنْفِقُ مِنْهُ سِرًّا وَجَهْرًا  
هَلْ يَسْتَوِيْنَ  
اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ  
بَلْ اَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ۝

٧٦- وَضَرَبَ اللّٰهُ مَثَلًا لِّكُفٰلَيْنِ اَحَدُهُمَا  
اَبْكَمٌ لَا يَقْدِرُ عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ كَلٌّ عَلَىٰ  
مَوْلٰٓئِهٖ  
اَيْنَمَا يُوْجِّهْهُ لَا يَأْتِ بِخَيْرٍ  
هَلْ يَسْتَوِي هُوَ وَمَنْ يٰمُرُّ

2106. Cf. xvi. 60 above, and n. 2086. One instance of false similitudes is where Pagans say their gods are mere types or symbols or where men pray to men as Intercessors.

2107. The first parable is of two men, one of whom is a slave completely under the dominion of another, with no powers of any sort, and another a free man, who is gifted in every way, and is most generous in bestowing out of his opulent wealth (material as well as intangible), privately and publicly, without let or hindrance; for he is his own master and owes no account to any one. The first is like the imaginary gods which men set up,—whether powers of nature, which have no independent existence but are manifestations of God, or deified heroes or men, who can do nothing of their own authority but are subject to the Will and Power of God; the second describes in a faint way the position of God, the Self-Subsistent, to Whom belongs the dominion of all that is in heaven and earth, and Who bestows freely of His gifts on all His creatures.

2108. In the second Parable, one man is dumb; he can explain nothing, and he can certainly do nothing; he is only a wearisome burden to his master, no matter what his master asks him to do; or perhaps he is really harmful instead of bringing any good; such are idols (literal and metaphorical) when taken as false gods. The other man is in a position to command, and he commands what is just and righteous; not only his commands but his doings also are on the path of righteousness. Such are the qualities of God.

Justice, and is on  
A Straight Way? <sup>2109</sup>

# SECTION 11.

77. No God belongeth the  
Mystery <sup>2110</sup>

Of the heavens and the earth.  
And the Decision of the Hour <sup>2111</sup>  
(Of Judgment) is as  
The twinkling of an eye,  
Or even quicker:  
For God hath power  
Over all things.

78. It is He Who brought you  
Forth from the wombs  
Of your mothers when  
Ye knew nothing; and He  
Gave you hearing and sight  
And intelligence and affections: <sup>2112</sup>  
That ye may give thanks  
(To God).

79. Do they not look at  
The birds, held poised  
In the midst of (the air  
And) the sky? Nothing  
Holds them up but (the power <sup>2113</sup>  
Of) God. Verily in this  
Are Signs for those who believe.

بِالْعَدْلِ وَهُوَ عَلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ

٤٧- وَلِلَّهِ غَيْبُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ  
وَمَا أَمْرُ السَّاعَةِ إِلَّا كَلَمْحِ الْبَصَرِ  
أَوْ هُوَ أَقْرَبُ  
إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ○

٤٨- وَاللَّهُ أَخْرَجَكُمْ مِنْ بُطُونِ  
أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ شَيْئًا  
وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ  
لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ○

٤٩- أَلَمْ يَرَوْا إِلَى الطَّيْرِ مُسَوِّرَاتٍ فِي جَوِّ  
السَّمَاءِ مَا يُمْسِكُهُنَّ إِلَّا اللَّهُ  
إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ○

2109. The gist of the argument is that those who deviate from the worship of the true God commit twofold treason. (1) They do not recognise the immense difference between the Creator and created things, although, in their own little selfish lives, they are tenacious of any little differences there may be between themselves and other fellow-creatures not so gifted. (2) They are guilty of gross ingratitude in forgetting that the source of all goodness and power is God, to Whom alone they owe all the gifts they enjoy in life.

2110. The key to all things—not only those which we see and understand, but those which we do not see or of which we have no idea—is with God, Whose knowledge and power are supreme.

2111. We must not imagine the Day (or Hour or Moment) of Judgment like a prolonged trial in an open court. It is independent of Time. Even "the twinkling of an eye" is not an adequate figure of speech.

2112. Literally, 'hearts,' which are considered the centres of the affections, and in Arabic idiom, of intelligence also. We should therefore give thanks to God, not to imaginary deities or powers or forces.

2113. All the wonderful things in creation are due to the artistry, power, and wisdom of God. Such is the flight of birds in mid-air. So also are the inventions and discoveries, due to man's intelligence, in the next verse; for man's intelligence is a gift direct from God.

80. It is God Who made your  
habitations

Homes of rest and quiet<sup>2114</sup>  
For you; and made for you,  
Out of the skins of animals,  
(Tents for) dwellings, which  
Ye find so light (and handy)  
When ye travel and when  
Ye stop (in your travels);<sup>2115</sup>  
And out of their wool,  
And their soft fibres<sup>2116</sup>  
(Between wool and hair),  
And their hair, rich stuff  
And articles of convenience<sup>2117</sup>  
(To serve you) for a time.<sup>2117</sup>

81. It is God Who made,  
Out of the things He created,  
Some things to give you shade;<sup>2118</sup>  
Of the hills He made some  
For your shelter; He made you  
Garments to protect you  
From heat, and coats of mail  
To protect you from  
Your (mutual) violence.<sup>2119</sup>  
Thus does He complete  
His favours on you, that  
Ye may bow to His Will<sup>2120</sup>  
(In Islām).

۝۸۰ وَاللّٰهُ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنْ بُيُوتِكُمْ سَكَنًا  
وَجَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنْ جُلُودِ الْاَنْعَامِ  
بُيُوتًا تَسْكُنُوهَا يَوْمَ تَطْعَمُكُمْ  
وَيَوْمَ اَقَامْتُمْكُمْ  
وَمِنْ اَصْوَابِهَا وَاَوْبَارُهَا  
وَاَشْعَارُهَا اَنَافًا  
وَمَتَاعًا اِلَىٰ حِينٍ ۝

۝۸۱ وَاللّٰهُ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنْ ثَمَارِهِ  
ظِلًّا وَجَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنَ الْجِبَالِ  
اَكْنَانًا وَجَعَلَ لَكُمْ سَرَابِيلَ  
تَقِيْكُمْ الْحَرَّ  
وَسَرَابِيلَ تَقِيْكُمْ بِاسْكُمْ كَذٰلِكَ يُتِمُّ  
رَحْمَتُهُ عَلَيْكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُسْلِمُوْنَ ۝

2114. Man's social, intellectual, and spiritual gifts make, of his permanent dwellings, homes of rest and quiet, of refinement and the purer affections, which are the types, in this earthly life, of the highest spiritual Good, the love of God. The pure Home thus becomes the type of the highest spiritual Destiny of man. And these capacities in man are the gifts of God

2115. When man travels, he wants temporary dwellings, tents, which he can make of the skins of animals, or of the fabrics of vegetable fibres, similar to the skins of animals. These tents are easy to carry when moving, and easy to pitch during halts.

2116. *Şaf*, wool, is what we get from sheep. *Sha'r*, hair, is what we get from goats or similar animals, for weaving into fabrics. *Wabar* is the soft camel's hair of which, also, fabrics are woven: they may be considered intermediate between the other two; by extension and analogy the term may be applied to furs and such things, by way of illustration.

2117. All such articles of refined luxury, and useful articles of comfort and convenience only last for a while, but they must be considered as God's gifts.

2118. For example, trees, gardens, the roofs of houses; also from another point of view, the fact that the sun's rays at various times and in various parts of the earth, come obliquely, thus causing shadow along with sunshine. In the hills there are caves and grottoes.

2119. Our clothes protect us from heat and cold, just as our armour protects us from the hurt which we might otherwise receive in battle.

2120. All these blessings, which have both a physical and (by promoting the good of man) a spiritual purpose, should teach us to rally to God and tune our will with His Universal Will, which is another name for Islām.

82. But if they turn away,  
Thy duty is only to preach  
The Clear Message.

۸۲- فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا  
فَاتِّمَّا عَلَيْكَ الْبَلْغُ الْمُبِينُ ○

83. They recognise the favours<sup>2121</sup>  
Of God; then they deny them;  
And most of them  
Are (creatures) ungrateful.

۸۳- يَكْفُرُونَ نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ يُكْفِرُوا بِهَا  
وَكَثُرُهُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ ○

C. 126.—God's apostles, if rejected, will be witnesses

(xvi. 84-100.) Against those who reject God's Truth!

And all false gods will disappear.

A life of justice and righteousness is enjoined

By God, and the strictest fidelity, in intent

And action. For God will judge us

By our faith and deeds, and no evil

Shall have power over those who believe

And put their trust in God their Lord.

## SECTION 12.

84. One Day We shall raise  
From all Peoples a Witness:<sup>2122</sup>  
Then will no excuse be accepted  
From Unbelievers, nor will they  
Receive any favours.

۸۴- وَيَوْمَ نَبْعَثُ مِنْ كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ شَهِيدًا  
ثُمَّ لَا يُوْذَنُ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَلَا لَهُمْ  
يُسْتَعْتَبُونَ ○

85. When the wrong-doers  
(Actually) see the Penalty,<sup>2123</sup>  
Then will it in no way  
Be mitigated, nor will they  
Then receive respite.

۸۵- وَإِذَا رَأَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا الْعَذَابَ  
فَلَا يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمْ وَلَا لَهُمْ  
يُنْظَرُونَ ○

86. When those who gave partners  
To God will see their "partners",

۸۶- وَإِذَا رَأَى الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا شُرَكَاءَهُمْ

2121. 'Arafa is distinguished from 'alima in implying a specific discernment (or recognition) of various qualities and uses. All mankind recognises the value of the blessings they enjoy, but in forgetting or disobeying their Author, the wicked show gross ingratitude; for in practice they deny their obligation to Him for those blessings.

2122. To each People is sent God's Messenger or Teacher, to point out the right way. There may be one, or there may be many. Such a Messenger (Rasul) will be a witness that God's Truth was preached to all peoples in express terms, in addition to the Signs of God everywhere in nature. There will then be no room for excuses of any kind. Those who rejected God after repeated warnings cannot reasonably ask for more respite, as they have had every kind of respite during their life of probation; nor can they now take refuge behind God's Grace, which they had repeatedly rejected.

2123. When the terrible Penalty is actually on them, it is too late for repentance and for asking for Mercy. Justice must take its course.



They will say: "Our Lord!  
These are our 'partners,' those  
Whom we used to invoke<sup>2124</sup>  
Besides Thee." But they will  
Throw back their word at them  
And say: "Indeed ye are liars!"

87. That day shall they (openly)  
<sup>show</sup><sup>2125</sup>  
(Their) submission to God; and all  
Their inventions shall leave  
Them in the lurch.

88. Those who reject God  
And hinder (men) from the Path  
Of God—for them  
Will We add Penalty  
To Penalty; for that they  
Used to spread mischief.

89. One day We shall raise  
From all Peoples a witness  
Against them, from amongst  
themselves:<sup>2126</sup>  
And We shall bring thee  
As a witness against these  
(Thy people): and We have sent  
down  
To thee the Book explaining  
All things, a Guide, a Mercy,  
And Glad Tidings to Muslims.

### SECTION 13.

90. God commands justice, the doing  
Of good, and liberality to kith

قَالُوا رَبَّنَا هَؤُلَاءِ شُرَكَائُنَا الَّذِينَ  
كُنَّا نَدْعُوا مِنْ دُونِكَ  
فَالْقَوْلُ إِلَيْهِمْ لَقَدْ بَوَّأْنَا

٨٧- وَأَلْقَوْا إِلَى اللَّهِ يَوْمَئِذٍ السَّلَامَ  
وَضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ  
مَا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ ○

٨٨- الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَصَدُّوا عَنْ سَبِيلِ  
اللَّهِ زُذْنُهُمْ عَذَابًا  
فَوْقَ الْعَذَابِ بِمَا كَانُوا يُفْسِدُونَ ○

٨٩- وَيَوْمَ نَبْعَثُ فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ شَهِيدًا  
عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِهِمْ  
وَجِئْنَا بِكَ شَهِيدًا عَلَى هَؤُلَاءِ  
وَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ تِبْيَانًا لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ  
وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً وَبُشْرَى لِلْمُسْلِمِينَ ○

٩٠- إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَ

2124. The worshippers of false gods will try to shift the responsibility from their own shoulders to that of the false gods. They will suggest (though they will not have the courage for such a bare-faced lie) that they were misled by the false gods. But their lying suggestion will be contradicted and thrown back at them as explained in the next note.

2125. In so far as the false gods were real things, such as deified men or forces of nature, they will openly disclaim them and then (as always) show their submission to God. In so far as the false gods were the inventions of the fancy of the idolaters, they will leave their worshippers in the lurch, for they will be shown as non-existent.

2126. To the thought expressed in xvi. 84 above, is added another detail here. Not only will there be witnesses from Peoples, but the witnesses will be men from amongst the Peoples themselves, men of their own kith and kin, who understood them and explained God's Message in their own language. The Apostle Muhammad will be witness against the Arabs who rejected him. For those who believe in him (of all races and peoples), the Book which he brought will be an Explanation, a Guide, a Mercy, and a Gospel.

And kin, and He forbids  
All shameful deeds, and injustice  
And rebellion: He instructs you,  
That ye may receive admonition.<sup>2127</sup>

إِنَّمَا أَمْرٌ ذِي الْقُرُونِ وَيَنْهَى عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ  
وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ ○

91. Fulfil the Covenant of God  
When ye have entered into it,  
And break not your oaths  
After ye have confirmed them;  
Indeed ye have made<sup>2128</sup>  
God your surety; for God  
Knoweth all that ye do.

أَمْ وَافُوا بعهْدِ اللَّهِ إِذَا عَاهَدْتُمْ  
وَلَا تَنْقُضُوا الْأَيْمَانَ بَعْدَ تَوْكِيدِهَا  
وَقَدْ جَعَلْتُمُ اللَّهَ عَلَيْكُمْ كَفِيلًا  
إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَفْعَلُونَ ○

92. And be not like a woman  
Who breaks into untwisted strands  
The yarn which she has spun,  
After it has become strong.<sup>2129</sup>  
Nor<sup>2130</sup> take your oaths to practise  
Deception between yourselves,  
Lest one party should be  
More numerous than another:<sup>2131</sup>  
For God will test you by this;  
And on the Day of Judgment

۹۲- وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّتِي نَقَضَتْ  
عَزْمَهَا مِنْ بَعْدِ قُوَّةٍ أَنْكَاثًا  
تَتَّخِذُونَ أَيْمَانَكُمْ دَخَلًا بَيْنَكُمْ  
أَنْ تَكُونَ أُمَّةٌ هِيَ أَرْبَى مِنْ أُمَّةٍ  
إِنَّمَا يَنْبَغِي لَكُمْ أَنْ تَعْلَمُوا يَوْمَ

2127. Justice is a comprehensive term, and may include all the virtues of cold philosophy. But religion asks for something warmer and more human, the doing of good deeds even where perhaps they are not strictly demanded by justice, such as returning good for ill, or obliging those who in worldly language "have no claim" on you; and of course *à fortiori* the fulfilling of the claims of those whose claims are recognised in social life. Similarly the opposites are to be avoided: everything that is recognised as shameful, and everything that is really unjust, and any inward rebellion against God's Law of our own conscience in its most sensitive form.

2128. The immediate reference may or may not be to the oath of fidelity to the Prophet taken at 'Aqaba fourteen months before the Hijra and repeated a little later: see v. 8, and n. 705. But the general meaning is much wider. And this may be viewed in two aspects (1) Every oath taken, or covenant made, is a Covenant before God, and should be faithfully observed. In this it approaches in meaning to v. 1. (2) In particular, every Muslim makes, by the profession of his Faith, a Covenant with God, and he confirms that Covenant every time he repeats that profession. He should therefore faithfully observe the duties taught to him by Islam.

2129. The Covenant which binds us in the spiritual world makes us strong, like strands of fluffy cotton spun into a strong thread. It also gives us a sense of security against much evil in this world. It costs a woman much labour and skill to spin good strong yarn. She would be foolish indeed, after she has spun such yarn, to untwist its constituent strands and break them into flimsy pieces.

2130. Nor: I construe *lattaḥḥizūna* with *lā laḥūnū* in the previous clause.

2131. Do not make your religion merely a game of making your own party numerically strong by alliances cemented by oaths, which you readily break when a more numerous party offers you its alliance. The Quraish were addicted to this vice, and in international politics at the present day, this seems to be almost a standard of national self-respect and international skill. Islam teaches nobler ethics for individuals and nations. A Covenant should be looked upon as a solemn thing, not to be entered into except with the sincerest intention of carrying it out; and it is binding even if large numbers are ranged against it.

He will certainly make clear  
To you (the truth of) that  
Wherein ye disagree.<sup>2132</sup>

93. If God so willed, He  
Could make you all one People:  
But He leaves straying<sup>2133</sup>  
Whom He pleases, and He guides  
Whom He pleases: but ye  
Shall certainly be called to account  
For all your actions.

94. And take not your oaths,  
To practise deception between  
yourselves,<sup>2134</sup>  
With the result that some one's foot  
May slip after it was  
Firmly planted, and ye may  
Have to taste the evil  
(consequences)  
Of having hindered (men)  
From the Path of God,  
And a mighty Wrath  
Descend on you.

95. Nor sell the Covenant of God  
For a miserable price:<sup>2135</sup>  
For with God is (a prize)  
Far better for you,  
If ye only knew.

الْقِيَمَةِ  
مَا كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ ○  
٩٣- وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً  
وَلَكِنْ يَفْضِلُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَهْدِي  
مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَلَتُسْأَلُنَّ  
عَمَّا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ○  
٩٤- وَلَا تَتَّخِذُوا أَيْمَانَكُمْ  
دَخَلًا بَيْنَكُمْ  
فَتَرَى قَدْرًا بَعْدَ ثُبُوتِهَا  
وَتَذُوقُوا الشَّوْءَ  
بِمَا صَدَقْتُمْ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ  
وَلَكُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ○  
٩٥- وَلَا تَبْتَاعُوا بِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا  
إِنَّمَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ هُوَ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ  
إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ○

2132. Disagreements need not necessarily cause conflict where the parties are sincere and honest and do not wish to take advantage of one another. In such cases they do not go by numbers, groupings, and alliances, but by just conduct as in the sight of God. Honest differences will be removed when all things are made clear in the Hereafter.

2133. Cf. xiv. 4 and n 1875. God's Will and Plan, in allowing limited free-will to man, is not to force man's will, but to give all guidance, and leave alone those who reject that guidance, in case they should repent and come back into Grace. But in all cases, in so far as we are given the choice, we shall be called to account for all our actions. "Leaving to stray" does not mean that we can do what we please. Our personal responsibility remains.

2134. In xvi. 92 above, the motive for false and fraudulent covenants was pointed out with reprobation. Now are pointed out the consequences, viz., (1) to others; if they had not been deceived, they might have walked firmly on the Path, but now they lose faith and perhaps commit like frauds for which you will be responsible; (2) to yourselves; you have not only gone wrong yourselves; but have set others on the wrong path; and you deserve a double Penalty. Perhaps the "evil consequences" refer to this world, and the "Wrath" to the Hereafter.

2135. Any possible gain that you can make by breaking your Covenant and thus breaking God's Law must necessarily be miserable; while your own benefit is far greater in obeying God's Will and doing right.

96. What is with you must vanish:  
What is with God will endure.  
And We will certainly bestow,  
On those who patiently persevere,  
Their reward according to  
The best of their actions.<sup>2136</sup>
97. Whoever works righteousness,  
Man or woman, and has Faith,—  
Verily, to him will We give  
A new Life, a life<sup>2137</sup>  
That is good and pure, and We  
Will bestow on such their reward  
According to the best  
Of their actions.<sup>2138</sup>
98. ~~When~~ When thou dost read<sup>2139</sup>  
The Qur-ān, seek God's protection  
From Satan the Rejected One.
99. No authority has he over those  
Who believe and put their trust  
In their Lord.
100. His authority is over those  
Only, who take him as patron  
And who join partners with God.
- ٩٦- مَا عِنْدَكُمْ يَنْفَدُ وَمَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ بَاقٍ  
وَلَنَجْزِيَنَ الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا  
أَجْرَهُمْ بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ○
- ٩٧- مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ اُنْثَىٰ  
وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهٗ حَيٰوةً طَيِّبَةً  
وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ بِأَحْسَنِ  
مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ○
- ٩٨- فَإِذَا قَرَأْتَ الْقُرْآنَ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ  
مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ ○
- ٩٩- إِنَّهُ لَيْسَ لَهُ سُلْطٰنٌ عَلَى الَّذِينَ  
آمَنُوا وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ ○
- ١٠٠- إِنَّمَا سُلْطٰنُهُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَتَوَكَّلُوهُ  
وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِهِ مُشْرِكُونَ ○

C. 127.—God's Truth may come in stages, but it gives  
(xvi. 101-128.) Strength, guidance, and glad tidings, and should  
Be held fast when once received. Be not  
Like those who get puffed up in pride

2136. What comparison can there possibly be between spiritual Good which will endure for ever, and any temporal advantage which you may snatch in this world, which will fade and vanish in no time? And then, God's generosity is unbounded. He rewards you, not according to your merits, but according to the very best of your actions.

2137. Faith, if sincere, means right conduct. When these two confirm each other, God's grace transforms our life. Instead of being troubled and worried, we have peace and contentment; instead of being assailed at every turn by false alarms and the assaults of evil, we enjoy calm and attain purity. The transformation is visible in this life itself, but the "reward" in terms of the Hereafter will be far beyond our deserts.

2138. The same ending as in the previous verse has the same effect as rhyme or a refrain in poetry, or the repetition of a leading *motif* in music. The argument is completed and rounded off.

2139. Evil has no authority or influence on those who put their trust in God. It is good to express that trust in outward actions and a formal expression of it—as in the formula, "I seek God's protection from Evil"—helps us. Reading or reciting the Qur-ān should be understood both literally and figuratively, as the symbol of the earnest desire of the soul to know and understand God's Will and act in accordance therewith. Man is weak at best, and he should seek strength for his will in God's help and protection.



104. Those who believe not  
In the Signs of God,—  
God will not guide them,  
And theirs will be  
A grievous Penalty.

١٠٤-إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ  
لَا يَهْدِيهِمُ اللَّهُ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ○

105. It is those who believe not  
In the Signs of God,  
That forge falsehood:  
It is they who lie!<sup>2144</sup>

١٠٥-إِنَّمَا يَفْتَرِي الْكَذِبَ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ  
بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ ○

106. Any one who, after accepting  
Faith in God, utters  
Unbelief,—<sup>2145</sup>  
Except under compulsion,  
His heart remaining firm  
In Faith—but such as  
Open their breast to Unbelief,—  
On them is Wrath from God,  
And theirs will be  
A dreadful Penalty.

١٠٦-مَنْ كَفَرَ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ إِيمَانِهِ  
إِلَّا مَنْ أُكْرِهَ وَقَلْبُهُ مُطْمَئِنٌّ بِالْإِيمَانِ  
وَلَكِنْ مَنْ شَرَحَ بِالْكُفْرِ صَدْرًا  
فَعَلَيْهِمْ غَضَبٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ  
وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ○

107. This because they love  
The life of this world  
Better than the Hereafter:  
And God will not guide  
Those who reject Faith.

١٠٧-ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ اسْتَحَبُّوا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا  
عَلَى الْآخِرَةِ ○  
وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ ○

108. Those are they whose hearts,  
Ears, and eyes God has sealed  
And they take no heed.<sup>up, 2146</sup>

١٠٨-أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ طَبَعَ اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ وَ  
سَمْعِهِمْ وَأَبْصَارِهِمْ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْغَافِلُونَ ○

109. Without doubt, in the Hereafter  
They will perish.

١٠٩-لَا جَرَمَ لَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ ○

2144. It is clearly those who raise the cry of forgery that are guilty of falsehood, as there is not the least basis or even plausibility in their suggestion.

2145. The exception refers to a case like that of 'Ammār, whose father Yāsir and mother Sumayya, were subjected to unspeakable tortures for their belief in Islam, but never recanted. 'Ammār himself was of less mature age and faith, and in a weak moment, suffering under tortures himself and his mind acted on by the sufferings of his parents, uttered a word construed as recantation, though his heart never wavered and he came back at once to the Prophet, who consoled him for his pain and confirmed his faith. There is no permission in this for weakness or dissembling under torture or persecution.

2146. Cf. ii. 7. On account of their iniquities and their want of Faith their hearts and their senses become impervious to God's grace, and they run headlong to perdition.

110. But verily thy Lord,—  
To those who leave their homes  
After trials and persecutions,—<sup>2147</sup>  
And who thereafter strive  
And fight for the Faith  
And patiently persevere,—  
Thy Lord, after all this  
Is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

## SECTION 15.

111. One Day every soul  
Will come up struggling<sup>2148</sup>  
For itself, and every soul  
Will be recompensed (fully)  
For all its actions, and none  
Will be unjustly dealt with.
112. God sets forth a Parable:  
A city enjoying security<sup>2149</sup>  
And quiet, abundantly supplied  
With sustenance from every  
place:  
Yet was it ungrateful  
For the favours of God:  
So God made it taste  
Of hunger and terror in extremes  
(Closing in on it) like a  
garment<sup>2150</sup>  
(From every side), because

۱۱۰- ثُمَّ لَئِنْ رَزَقْنَا لِلَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا  
مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا قُتِلُوا  
ثُمَّ جَاهِدُوا وَصَبَرُوا  
إِنَّ رَبَّكَ مِنْ بَعْدِهَا غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ۝

۱۱۱- يَوْمَ تَأْتِي كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِجُودِلٍ عَنْ نَفْسِهَا  
وَتُؤْتَى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا عَمِلَتْ  
وَهُمْ لَا يَظْلُمُونَ ۝

۱۱۲- وَضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا قَرْيَةً كَانَتْ آمِنَةً  
مُطْمَئِنَّةً بِأَيْدِيهَا وَرِثَاقَهَا رِزْقًا مِنَ كُلِّ  
مَكَانٍ  
فَكَفَرَتْ بِأَنْعُمِ اللَّهِ  
فَآذَنَّاها اللَّهُ لِبَاسِ  
الْجُوعِ وَالْخَوْفِ

2147. I take this verse to refer to such men as were originally with the Pagans but afterwards joined Islam, suffered hardships and exile, and fought and struggled in the Cause, with patience and constancy. Their past would be blotted out and forgiven. Men like *Khalid ibn Walid* were numbered with the foremost heroes of Islam. In that case this verse would be a Medina verse, though the *Sūra* as a whole is Meccan. Perhaps it would be better to read, with some Commentators, *fatanū* in the active voice rather than *futinū* in the passive voice, and translate "after inflicting trials and persecutions (on Muslims)." Notice the parallelism in construction between this verse and verse 119 below.

2148. When the Reckoning comes, each soul will stand on its own personal responsibility. No one else can help it. Full justice will be done, and all the seeming inequalities of this world will be redressed.

2149. The reference may be to any of the cities or populations in ancient or modern times, which were favoured with security and other blessings from God, but which rebelled from God's Law and tasted the inevitable penalty, even in the midst of their iniquities. Some Commentators see here a reference to the city of Mecca under Pagan control. See next note.

2150. There is a double metaphor: (1) the *tasting* of hunger and terror after the abundant supplies and the full security which it had enjoyed; and (2) the complete *enfolding* of the City as with a *garment*, by these two scourges, hunger and a state of subjective alarm. If the reference is to Mecca shortly before its fall to the Muslims, the "hunger" was the seven years' severe famine which afflicted it, and the alarm was the constant fear in the minds of the Pagans that their day was done. Peace and prosperity were restored after the re-entry of the Apostle.





117. (In such falsehood)  
Is but a paltry profit;  
But they will have  
A most grievous Penalty.

١١٧- مَتَاعٌ قَلِيلٌ  
وَأَلْهَمَهُمْ عَذَابَ الْآلِيمِ ۝

118. ~~No~~ the Jews We prohibited  
Such things as We have  
Mentioned to thee before: <sup>2154</sup>  
We did them no wrong,  
But they were used to  
Doing wrong to themselves.

١١٨- وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ هَادُوا حَزَمْنَا  
مَا فَعَصَيْنَا عَلَيْكَ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۚ وَمَا ظَلَمْنَاهُمْ  
وَلَكِنْ كَانُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ ۝

119. But verily thy Lord,—  
To those who do wrong  
In ignorance, but who  
Thereafter repent and make  
amends,—  
Thy Lord, after all this,  
Is Oft-Forgiving, Most  
Merciful. <sup>2155</sup>

١١٩- ثُمَّ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لِلَّذِينَ عَمِلُوا الشُّوْءَ  
بِغَهَالَةٍ ثُمَّ تَابُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ وَأَصْلَحُوا  
إِنَّ رَبَّكَ مِنْ بَعْدِهَا  
لَعَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ۝

#### SECTION 16.

120. Abraham was indeed a  
model, <sup>2156</sup>  
Devoutly obedient to God,  
(And) true in faith, and he  
Joined not gods with God: <sup>2157</sup>

١٢٠- إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ كَانَ أُمَّةً قَانِتًا لِلَّهِ  
حَنِيفًا ۚ وَلَمْ يَكُ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ۝

121. He showed his gratitude  
For the favours of God,  
Who chose him, and guided him  
To a Straight Way.

١٢١- شَاكِرًا لِأَنْعُمِهِ  
اجْتَبَاهُ وَهَدَاهُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ۝

122. And We gave him Good  
In this world, and he will be,

١٢٢- وَآتَيْنَاهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً ۚ وَإِنَّهُ

2154. See vi. 146 and n. The further prohibitions to them were a punishment for their hardness of hearts, and not a favour.

2155. See above, xvi. 110, and n. 2147. The parallelism in construction confirms the suggestion of the alternative reading which is made in that note. The similarity of expressions also rounds off the argument, as by a refrain in poetry. What follows now in this Sūra is an exhortation to right conduct.

2156. *Ummat*: a model, pattern, example for imitation: but the idea that he was an *Ummat* in himself, standing alone against his world, should not be lost sight of. See next note.

2157. The Gospel of Unity has been the corner-stone of spiritual Truth for all time. In this respect Abraham is the model and fountain-head for the world of western Asia and its spiritual descendants all over the world. Abraham was among a people (the Chaldeans) who worshipped stars and had forsaken the Gospel of Unity. He was among them but not of them. He suffered persecution, and left his home and his people, and settled in the land of Canaan.

In the Hereafter, in the ranks  
Of the Righteous.<sup>2158</sup>

123. So We have taught thee  
The inspired (message),  
"Follow the ways of Abraham  
The True in Faith, and he  
Joined not gods with God".
124. The Sabbath was only made<sup>2159</sup>  
(Strict) for those who disagreed  
(As to its observance);  
But God will judge between them  
On the Day of Judgment,  
As to their differences.<sup>2160</sup>
125. Invite (all) to the Way  
Of thy Lord with wisdom  
And beautiful preaching;  
And argue with them  
In ways that are best  
And most gracious:<sup>2161</sup>  
For thy Lord knoweth best,  
Who have strayed from His Path,

فِي الْآخِرَةِ لِنَسْطَرِ الْمُتَّبِعِينَ ۝

۱۲۳- ثُمَّ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ  
أَنِ اتَّبِعْ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا  
وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ۝

۱۲۴- إِنَّمَا جَعَلُ السَّبْتِ عَلَى الَّذِينَ اِخْتَلَفُوا  
فِيهِ ۚ وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَيَكْتُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ  
فِيمَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ ۝

۱۲۵- ادْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمَةِ  
وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ  
وَجَادِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ  
هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ

2158. Cf. ii. 130.

2159. If Abraham's Way was the right way, the Jews were ready with the taunt, "Why don't you then observe the Sabbath?" The answer is twofold. (1) The Sabbath has nothing to do with Abraham. It was instituted with the Law of Moses because of Israel's hardness of heart (ii. 74); for they constantly disputed with their Prophet Moses (ii. 104), and there were constantly among them afterwards men who broke the Sabbath (ii. 65, and n. 79). (2) Which was the true Sabbath Day? The Jews observe Saturday. The Christians, who include the Old Testament in their inspired Scripture, observe Sunday, and a sect among them (the Seventh Day Adventists) disagree, and observe Saturday. So there is disagreement among the People of the Book. Let them dispute among themselves. Their dispute will not be settled till the Day of Judgment. Meanwhile, Muslims are emancipated from such stringent restrictions. For them there is certainly the Day of United Prayer on Friday, but it is in no sense like the Jewish or the Scotch Sabbath!

2160. Cf. ii. 113.

2161. In this wonderful passage are laid down principles of religious teaching, which are good for all time. But where are the Teachers with such qualifications? We must invite all to the Way of God, and expound His Universal Will; we must do it with wisdom and discretion, meeting people on their own ground and convincing them with illustrations from their own knowledge and experience, which may be very narrow, or very wide. Our preaching must be, not dogmatic, not self-regarding, not offensive, but gentle, considerate, and such as would attract their attention. Our manner and our arguments should not be acrimonious, but modelled on the most courteous and the most gracious example, so that the hearer may say to himself, "This man is not dealing merely with dialectics; he is not trying to get a rise out of me; he is sincerely expounding the faith that is in him, and his motive is the love of man and the love of God."

And who receive guidance.<sup>2162</sup>

126. And if ye do catch them out,  
Catch them out no worse  
Than they catch you out:  
But if ye show patience,  
That is indeed the best (course)<sup>2163</sup>  
For those who are patient.

127. And do thou be patient,<sup>2164</sup>  
For thy patience is but  
From God; nor grieve over them:  
And distress not thyself  
Because of their plots.

128. For God is with those<sup>2165</sup>  
14 Who restrain themselves,  
30 And those who do good.

وَهُوَ أَخْلَمُ بِالْمُنْتَدِينَ  
۝۱۲۶ وَإِنْ عَاقَبْتُمْ فَعَاقِبُوا  
بِمِثْلِ مَا عُوقِبْتُمْ بِهِ  
وَلَكِنْ صَبْرُكُمْ لَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لِلظَّالِمِينَ ۝

۝۱۲۷ وَاصْبِرْ وَمَا صَبْرُكَ  
إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ وَلَا تَحْزَنْ عَلَيْهِمْ  
وَلَا تَكُنْ فِي هَبْنِي مِمَّا يَنْكَرُونَ ۝

۝۱۲۸ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا  
وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ يُحْسِنُونَ ۝

128

2162. It may be that the Preacher sometimes says to himself "What is the use of teaching these people? they have made up their minds, or they are obstinate, or they are only trying to catch me out." Let him not yield to such a thought. Who knows how the seed of the Word of God may germinate in people's minds? It is not for man to look for results. Man's inner thoughts are known best to God.

2163. In the context this passage refers to controversies and discussions, but the words are wide enough to cover all human struggles, disputes, and fights. In strictest equity you are not entitled to give a worse blow than is given to you. But those who have reached a higher spiritual standard do not even do that. They restrain themselves, and are patient. Lest you should think that such patience only gives an advantage to the adversary, you are told that the contrary is the case: the advantage is with the patient, the self-possessed, those who do not lose their temper or forget their own principles of conduct.

2164. In the previous verse are laid down the principles of conduct in controversy for all Muslims: 'if you catch them out, you are not entitled to strike a heavier blow than you received, but it is better to restrain yourself and be patient.' There patience was recommended. In this verse a command is directly addressed to the Prophet, 'Do thou be patient.' It is a command: his standard as the Great Teacher is much higher; and he carried it out in his life. His patience and self-restraint were under circumstances of extraordinary provocation. In his human wisdom it may sometimes have seemed questionable whether forbearance and self-restraint might not be human weaknesses; he had to defend his people as well as himself against the enemy's persecutions. He is told here that he need not entertain any such fears. Patience (with constancy) in those circumstances was in accordance with God's own command. Nor was he to grieve if they rejected God's Message; the Prophet had done his duty when he boldly and openly proclaimed it. Nor was his heart to be troubled if they hatched secret plots against himself and his people. God would protect them.

2165. And the Sūra ends with the highest consolation which the righteous can receive: the assurance that God is with them. A double qualification is indicated for so high an honour,—(1) that they should not yield to human passion or anger or impatience, and (2) that they should go on with constancy doing good all around them. To attain to the Presence of God in the sense of "I am with you" is the culmination of the righteous man's aspiration.

INTRODUCTION TO SŪRA XVII (*Banī Isrā-ʾil*).

In the gradation of spiritual teaching (see Introduction to Sūra viii), we saw that the first seven Sūras sketched the early spiritual history of man, and led up to the formation of the new Ummat of Islam. Sūras viii to xvi formed another series dealing with the formation of the new Ummat and its consolidation, and God's dealing with man taken as an Ummat and considered in his social relations in organised communities (see Introductions to Suras viii, x, and xvi). We now come to a fresh series, (Sūras xvii-xxix), which may be considered in three parts. Sūras xvii-xxi begin with an allusion to the *Mi'rāj* (of which more later), and proceed to spiritual history as touching individuals rather than nations. The old prophets and stories of the past are now referred to from this point of view. Sūras xxii-xxv refer to Ḥajj (pilgrimage), worship and prayer, chastity, privacy, etc., as related to a man's individual spiritual growth. Sūras xxvi-xxix go back to the old prophets and stories of the past, as illustrating the growth of the individual soul in its reactions against the lives of the communities, and the reactions of the communities to the lives of its great individual souls.

Let us now consider S. xvii. by itself. It opens with the mystic Vision of the Ascension of the Holy Prophet: he was transported from the Sacred Mosque (of Mecca) to the Farthest Mosque (of Jerusalem) in a night and shown some of the Signs of God. The majority of Commentators take this Night Journey literally, but allow that there were other occasions on which a spiritual Journey or Vision occurred. Even on the supposition of a miraculous bodily Journey, it is conceded that the body was almost transformed into a spiritual fineness. The Ḥadīth literature gives details of this Journey and its study helps to elucidate its mystic meaning. The holy Prophet was first transported to the seat of the earlier revelations in Jerusalem, and then taken through the seven heavens, even to the Sublime Throne, and initiated into the spiritual mysteries of the human soul struggling in Space and Time. The Spaniard, Miguel Asín, Arabic Professor in the University of Madrid, has shown that this *Mi'rāj* literature had a great influence on the Mediæval literature of Europe, and especially on the great Italian poem, the *Divine Comedy* (or Drama) of Dante, which towers like a landmark in mediæval European literature.

The reference to this great mystic story of the *Mi'rāj* is a fitting prelude to the journey of the human soul in its spiritual growth in life. The first steps in such growth must be through moral conduct—the reciprocal rights of parents and children, kindness to our fellow-men, courage and firmness in the hour of danger, a sense of personal responsibility, and a sense of God's Presence through prayer and praise.

The *Mi'rāj* is usually dated to the 27th night of the month of Rajab (though other dates, e.g., 17th of Rabī' I, are also given) in the year before the Hijra. This fixes the date of the opening verse of the Sūra, though portions of the Sūra may have been a little earlier.

*Summary*

The spiritual experiences of the men of God are given in order that God's Signs may be made clear to men: man is misled into evil, and must be guided to a sense of personal responsibility (xvii. 1-22, and C. 128).

Our service to God is shown also in our human relations, goodness to parents and kinsmen and strangers in want, as well as kindness to children, purity in sex relations, justice and respect for human life, protection of orphans, probity in all dealings, and avoidance of arrogance (xvii. 23-40 and C. 129).

God's glory is above all comparison, and the reception of His revelation marks off the man of faith from those who do not believe. But the Believers should speak fair and avoid dissensions, for God doth encompass all men (xvii. 41-60, and C. 130).

Pride caused the fall of Iblis, but the children of Adam have been raised in excellence above other Creation. They will be judged by their deeds. Prayer is good at stated times and at night, and the Qur-ān is offered as healing and mercy (xvii. 61-84, and C. 131).

Inspiration (the Qur-ān) is a Sign of God's grace, and men should accept it without making carping excuses. Be humble in prayer and praise (xvii. 85-111, and C. 132).

C. 128.—It is the privilege of the men of God  
(xvii. 1-22.) To see the sublimest mysteries  
Of the spiritual world and instruct men  
In Righteousness; they warn and shield men  
Against Evil. But nothing can lessen  
Each soul's personal responsibility  
For its own deeds. It carries its fate  
Round its own neck. God's gifts  
Are for all, but not all receive  
The same gifts, nor are all gifts  
Of equal dignity or excellence.

## Sūra XVII.

*Banī Isrā-īl*, or the Children of Israel.

*In the name of God, Most Gracious,  
Most Merciful.*



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

1. **Glory to (God)**  
Who did take His Servant  
For a Journey by night <sup>2166</sup>  
From the Sacred Mosque <sup>2167</sup>  
To the Farthest Mosque, <sup>2168</sup>  
Whose precincts We did  
Bless,—in order that We  
Might show him some  
Of Our Signs: for He  
Is the One Who heareth  
And seeth (all things). <sup>2169</sup>
2. We gave Moses the Book, <sup>2170</sup>  
And made it a Guide

١- سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَسْرَى بِعَبْدِهِ  
لَيْلًا مِّنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ  
إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ الْأَقْصَا  
الَّذِي بَرَكْنَا حَوْلَهُ لِنُرِيَهُ  
مِنَ السَّمَاءِ  
إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ ○  
٢- وَآتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ وَجَعَلْنَاهُ هُدًى

2166. The reference is to the *Mi'rāj*, for which see the Introduction to this Sūra.

2167. *Masjid* is a place of prayer: here it refers to the Ka'ba at Mecca. It had not yet been cleared of its idols and rededicated exclusively to the One True God. It was symbolical of the new Message which was being given to mankind.

2168. *The Farthest Mosque* must refer to the site of the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem on the hill of Moriah, at or near which stands the Dome of the Rock, called also the Mosque of *Ḥaḍhrat 'Umar*. This and the Mosque known as the Farthest Mosque (*Masjid-ul-Aqṣā*) were completed by the Amr 'Abd-ul-Malik in A.H. 68. *Farthest*, because it was the place of worship farthest west which was known to the Arabs in the time of the holy Prophet: it was a sacred place to both Jews and Christians, but the Christians then had the upper hand, as it was included in the Byzantine (Roman) Empire, which maintained a Patriarch at Jerusalem. The chief dates in connection with the Temple are: it was finished by Solomon about B.C. 1004; destroyed by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar about 586 B.C.; rebuilt under Ezra and Nehemiah about 515 B.C.; turned into a heathen idol-temple by one of Alexander's successors, Antiochus Epiphanes, 167 B.C.; restored by Herod, B.C. 17 to A.D. 29; and completely razed to the ground by the Emperor Titus in A.D. 70. These ups and downs are among the greater Signs in religious history.

2169. God's knowledge comprehends all things, without any curtain of Time or any separation of Space. He can therefore see and hear all things, and the *Mi'rāj* was a reflection of this knowledge without Time or Space.

In this and the subsequent verses, the reference to God is generally in the first person and plural. But in the first and the last clause of this verse it is in the third person singular: "Glory to God, Who did take His Servant....."; "He is the One.....". In each of these two instances, the clause expresses the point of view of God's creatures, who glorify Him, and whose hearing and seeing are ordinarily so limited that they can do nothing but glorify Him when one of His creatures is raised up to hear and see the Mysteries. It is *they* who glorify Him.

2170. *The Book*: the revelation that was given to Moses. It was there clearly laid down that those who followed Moses must consider God as all-in-all. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me; thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.....; thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God.....;" etc. (Exod. xx. 3-5). These are the words of the English Bible. As a matter of fact the spirit of the Mosaic teaching went further. It referred all things to the Providence of God: God is the Disposer of all affairs, and we are to look to none but Him. This is Islam, and the *Mi'rāj* showed that it was the teaching of God from the most ancient times, and yet it was violated by the very people who claimed to be its custodians.

To the Children of Israel,  
(Commanding): "Take not  
Other than Me <sup>2171</sup>  
As Disposer of (your) affairs."

3. Oh ye that are sprung  
From those whom we carried  
(In the Ark) with Noah! <sup>2172</sup>  
Verily he was a devotee  
Most grateful.

4. And We gave (clear) warning  
To the Children of Israel <sup>2173</sup>  
In the Book, that twice <sup>2174</sup>  
Would they do mischief  
On the earth and be elated  
With mighty arrogance  
(And twice would they be punished)!

5. When the first of the warnings  
Came to pass, We sent  
Against you Our servants  
Given to terrible warfare: <sup>2175</sup>  
They entered the very inmost  
Parts of your homes;  
And it was a warning  
(Completely) fulfilled.

يَبْنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ إِلَّا تَنجُدُوا  
مِنْ دُونِي وَكَيْلًا ۝

٣- ذُرِّيَّةَ مَنْ حَمَلْنَا مَعَ نُوحٍ  
إِنَّهُ كَانَ عَبْدًا شَكُورًا ۝

٤- وَقَضَيْنَا إِلَىٰ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ  
فِي الْكِتَابِ لَتُفْسِدُنَّ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَّتَيْنِ  
وَتَعْلُنَّ عُلُوًّا كَبِيرًا ۝

٥- وَإِذَا جَاءَ وَعْدُ أُولَاهُمَا بَعَثْنَا  
عَلَيْكُمْ عِبَادًا لَنَا أُولَىٰ بِأَبْصَارِهِ  
فَجَاسُوا خِلَالَ دِيَارِكُمْ  
وَكَانَ وَعْدُ امْقِعُولَا ۝

2171. Note the transition from "We" in the first clause to "Me" in the second clause. The first clause refers to the majesty of God as the Heavenly King; the second clause refers to His personal interest in all our affairs.

2172 After the Deluge of the time of Noah the only descendants of Noah were those who were saved in the Ark with him. They had special reason to celebrate the praises of God. But they relapsed into idolatry, sin, and abominations. They are reminded of the true and sincere devotion of Noah himself, as contrasted with the unworthiness of Noah's descendants, especially the Children of Israel.

2173. The Book is the revelation given to the Children of Israel. Here it seems to refer to the burning words of Prophets like Isaiah. For example, see Isaiah, chap. xxiv or Isaiah v. 20-30, or Isaiah iii. 16-26.

2174. What are the two occasions referred to? It may be that "twice" is a figure of speech for "more than once", "often". Or it may be that the two occasions refer to (1) the destruction of the Temple by the Babylonian Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C., when the Jews were carried off into captivity, and (2) the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in A.D. 70, after which the Temple was never re-built. See n. 2168 above. On both occasions it was a judgment of God for the sins of the Jews, their back-slidings and their arrogance.

2175. A good description of the war-like Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonians. They were servants of God in the sense that they were instruments through which the wrath of God was poured out on the Jews, for they penetrated through their lands, their Temple, and their homes, and carried away the Jews, men and women, into captivity. As regards "the daughters of Zion" see the scathing condemnation in Isaiah, iii. 16-26.

6. Then did We grant you  
The Return as against them : <sup>2176</sup>  
We gave you increase  
In resources and sons,  
And made you  
The more numerous  
In man-power.

٧- ثُمَّ رَدَدْنَا لَكُمُ الْكَفَّةَ عَلَيْهِمْ  
وَأَمَدَدْنَكُمْ بِأَمْوَالٍ وَبَنِينَ  
وَجَعَلْنَكُمْ أَكْثَرَ تَفِيرًا ۝

7. If ye did well,  
Ye did well for yourselves ;  
If ye did evil,  
(Ye did it) against yourselves. <sup>2177</sup>  
So when the second  
Of the warnings came to pass,  
(We permitted your enemies)  
To disfigure your faces, <sup>2178</sup>  
And to enter your Temple <sup>2179</sup>  
As they had entered it before,  
And to visit with destruction  
All that fell into their power. <sup>2180</sup>

٨- إِنْ أَحْسَنْتُمْ أَحْسَنْتُمْ لِأَنفُسِكُمْ  
وَلِنْ أَسَاءْتُمْ فَالَهَا  
فَإِذَا جَاءَ وَعْدُ الْآخِرَةِ  
لِيُؤْذُوا وَجُوهَكُمْ  
وَلِيَدْخُلُوا الْمَسْجِدَ كَمَا دَخَلُوهُ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ  
وَلِيُتَبَرِّكُوا مَا عَالَمُوا بَتِغْيَارًا ۝

8. It may be that your Lord  
May (yet) show Mercy <sup>2181</sup>

٨- عَلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ أَنْ يَرْحَمَكُمْ ۝

2176. The return of the Jews from the Captivity was about 520 B.C. They started life afresh. They rebuilt their Temple. They carried out various reforms and built up a new Judaism in connection with Ezra. See appendix II following S. v. For a time they prospered. Meanwhile their old oppressors the Babylonians had been absorbed by Persia. Subsequently Persia was absorbed in Alexander's Empire. The whole of western Asia was Hellenized, and the new school of Jews was Hellenized also, and had a strong centre in Alexandria. But their footing in Palestine continued, and under the Asmonæan Dynasty (B. C. 167-63), they had a national revival, and the names of the Maccabees are remembered as those of heroes. Another dynasty, that of the Idumæans, (B.C. 63 to B.C. 4), to which Herod belonged, also enjoyed some semi-independent power. The sceptre of Syria (including Palestine) passed to the Romans in B. C. 63 and Jewish feudatory Kings held power under them. But the Jews again showed a stiff-necked resistance to God's Messenger in the time of Jesus, and the inevitable doom followed in the complete and final destruction of the Temple under Titus in 70 A.D.

2177. This is a parenthetical sentence. If anyone follows God's Law, the benefit goes to himself: he does not bestow a favour on anyone else. Similarly evil brings its own recompense on the doer of evil.

2178. The second doom was due to the rejection of the Message of Jesus. "To disfigure your faces" means to destroy any credit or power you may have got: the face shows the personality of the man.

2179. Titus's destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. was complete. He was a son of the Roman Emperor Vespasian, and at the date of the destruction of Jerusalem, had the title of Cæsar as heir to throne. He ruled as Roman Emperor from 79 to 81 A.D.

2180. Merivale in his *Romans Under the Empire* gives a graphic account of the siege and final destruction (ed. 1890, vii. 221-255). The population of Jerusalem was then 200,000. According to the Latin historian Tacitus it was as much as 600,000. There was a famine and there were massacres. There was much fanaticism. The judgment of Merivale is: "They" (the Jews) "were judiciously abandoned to their own passions and the punishment which naturally awaited them" (vii. 221).

2181. Now we come to the time of our holy Prophet. In spite of all the past, the Jews could still have obtained God's forgiveness if they had not obstinately rejected the greatest of the Prophets also. If they were to continue in their sins, God's punishment would also continue to visit them.



Unto you; but if ye  
Revert (to your sins),  
We shall revert  
(To Our punishments):  
And We have made Hell  
A prison for those who  
Reject (all Faith).<sup>2182</sup>

وَلَنْ عَذَابُهُمْ  
وَجَعَلْنَا جَهَنَّمَ  
لِلْكَافِرِينَ حَصِيرًا ٥

9. Verily this Qur-an  
Doth guide to that  
Which is most right (or stable),<sup>2183</sup>  
And giveth the glad tidings  
To the Believers who work  
Deeds of righteousness,  
That they shall have  
A magnificent reward;

إِنَّ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ يَهْدِي لِلَّذِي  
هُوَ أَقْوَمُ وَيُبَشِّرُ  
الْمُؤْمِنِينَ الَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ الصَّالِحَاتِ  
أَن لَهُمْ أَجْرًا كَبِيرًا ٥

10. And to those who believe not  
In the Hereafter, (it announceth)  
That We have prepared  
For them a Penalty  
Grievous (indeed).

وَالَّذِينَ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ  
أَعْتَدْنَا لَهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا ٥

#### SECTION 2.

11. The prayer that man  
Should make for good,  
He maketh for evil;<sup>2184</sup>  
For man is given to  
Hasty (deeds).

وَيَذَرُ الْإِنْسَانُ بِالشَّرِّ دُعَاءَهُ بِالْخَيْرِ  
وَكَانَ الْإِنْسَانُ عَجُولًا ٥

12. We have made the Night  
And the Day as two<sup>2185</sup>

وَجَعَلْنَا اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ آيَاتَيْنِ ٥

2182. There is such a thing as disgrace in this life, but the final disgrace is in the Hereafter, and that will be irretrievable.

Notice that the allegorical reference to Jewish history, when brought into relation with the mystic meaning of Mi'raj, refers to the constant struggle of the individual soul against evil. It has its setbacks and its punishments. But if it is true to itself and is true to the Faith in God, God will give it strength and make it successful in its fight against evil. For God's Mercy is unbounded and comes to suffering humanity again and again.

2183. The instability and crookedness of the Jewish soul having been mentioned, the healing balm which should have cured it is now pointed out. The Message of the Qur-an is for all. Those who have Faith and show that Faith in their conduct must reap their spiritual reward. But those who reject Faith cannot escape punishment. Apart from what is past, apart from questions of national or racial history, there is a spiritual Hope—and a spiritual Danger—for every soul.

2184. Man in his ignorance or haste mistakes evil for good, and desires what he should not have. The wise and instructed soul has patience and does not put its own desires above the wisdom of God. He receives with contentment the favours of God, and prays to be rightly guided in his desires and petitions.

2185. If we were to cry when it is night, we shall look foolish when it is day; for the night is but a preparation for the day: perhaps, as the last verse says, we pray for the day when we want rest for the night. Both are Signs from God. Darkness and light stand for ignorance and knowledge. "Where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise." Darkness and light may also stand for shadow and sunshine, sorrow and joy: both may be necessary for our development.

(Of Our) Signs : the Sign  
Of the Night have We obscured,  
While the Sign of the Day  
We have made to enlighten  
You; that ye may seek  
Bounty from your Lord,<sup>2186</sup>  
And that ye may know  
The number and count  
Of the years : all things  
Have We explained in detail.

فَصَوَّرْنَا آيَةَ اللَّيْلِ  
وَجَعَلْنَا آيَةَ النَّهَارِ مُبْصِرَةً  
لِتَبْتَغُوا فَضْلًا مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ  
وَلِتَعْلَمُوا عَدَدَ السِّنِينَ وَالْحِسَابِ  
وَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ فَصَّلْنَاهُ تَفْصِيلًا ۝

13. Every man's fate<sup>2187</sup>  
We have fastened  
On his own neck :  
On the Day of Judgment  
We shall bring out  
For him a scroll,  
Which he will see  
Spread open.<sup>2188</sup>

۝۱۳- وَكُلَّ إِنْسَانٍ أَلْزَمْنَاهُ  
طَلْعَهُ فِي عُنُقِهِ  
وَنُخْرِجُ لَهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ كِتَابًا  
يَلْقَاهُ مَنْشُورًا ۝

14. (It will be said to him :)  
"Read thine (own) record :  
Sufficient is thy soul  
This day to make out  
An account against thee."<sup>2189</sup>

۝۱۴- اقْرَأْ كِتَابَكَ  
كُفِيَ بِنَفْسِكَ الْيَوْمَ عَلَيْكَ حَسِيبًا ۝

2186. By the physical light we see physical facts. And this physical gift of God is good for us in two ways : (1) we can arrange for our livelihood, or we can attain the knowledge of the physical sciences and gain some control over the physical forces of nature ; and (2) the daily rising and setting of the sun gives us the computation of days and years, for the physical natural year is the solar year. But there is a spiritual light even more precious : by it we can similarly attain two objects, viz. : (1) our spiritual livelihood and knowledge, and (2) our computation of the stages we reach in our spiritual years. Let us be patient and seek everything as from God,—in joy and in sorrow, in knowledge and in want of knowledge of those things which are above us. Let us rejoice in what God has given us, and not be impatient about those things which He in His wisdom has thought fit to withhold from us. But all things should be sought and striven for under the guidance of the All-Knowing God.

2187. *Fate* : *Ṭā'ir*, literally a bird, hence an omen, an evil omen, fate. Cf. xxxvi. 19. The Arabs, like the ancient Romans, sought to read the mysteries of human fate from the flight of birds. And many of us in our own day seek to read our future fortunes by similar superstitions. We read in the previous verse that there are Signs of God, but they are not meant to subserve the vulgar purpose of disclosing our future destiny in a worldly sense. They are meant for quite other purposes, as we have explained. Our real fate does not depend upon birds or omens or stars. It depends on our deeds, good or evil, and they hang round our necks. Man is the maker of his own fortune.

2188. These deeds, good or evil, will be embodied in a scroll which will be quite open to us in the light of the Day of Judgment, however much we may affect to be ignorant of it now or waste our energies in prying into mysteries that do not concern us.

2189. Our true accusers are our own deeds. Why not look to them instead of vainly prying into something superstitious which we call a book of fortune or a book of omens ?

15. ~~Who~~ ho receiveth guidance,  
 Receiveth it for his own  
 Benefit : who goeth astray  
 Doth so to his own loss : <sup>2190</sup>  
 No bearer of burdens  
 Can bear the burden <sup>2191</sup>  
 Of another : nor would We  
 Visit with Our Wrath  
 Until We had sent  
 An apostle (to give warning).

هـ-مَن اهْتَدَى فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِي لِنَفْسِهِ  
 وَمَن ضَلَّ فَإِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهَا  
 وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَى  
 وَمَا كُنَّا مُعَذِّبِينَ  
 حَتَّىٰ نَبْعَثَ رَسُولًا

16. When We decide to destroy  
 A population, We (first) send  
 A definite order to those  
 Among them who are given  
 The good things of this life <sup>2192</sup>  
 And yet transgress; so that  
 The word is proved true <sup>2193</sup>  
 Against them : then (it is)  
 We destroy them utterly.

١٦- وَإِذَا أَرَدْنَا أَن نُهْلِكَ قَرْيَةً  
 مِّنْهُمْ إِنَّمَا فَتَفْشُوْنَ فِيهَا  
 فَتْحَىٰ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَوْلُ  
 فَذَمَّرْنَاهَا تَدْمِيرًا

17. How many generations  
 Have We destroyed after  
 Noah ? <sup>2194</sup>  
 And enough is thy Lord  
 To note and see  
 The sins of His servants. <sup>2195</sup>

١٧- وَكَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِنَ الْقُرُونِ مِن بَعْدِ  
 نُوحٍ وَكَفَىٰ بِرَبِّكَ بِذُنُوبِ عَمَّاوَةَ  
 خَبِيرًا بَصِيرًا

2190. The doctrine of personal responsibility is insisted on, and the basis of ethics is shown to be our own good or evil as furthering or obstructing our highest development.

2191. The doctrine of vicarious atonement is condemned. Salvation for the wicked cannot be attained by the punishment of the innocent. One man cannot bear the burden of another: that would be unjust. Every man must bear his own personal responsibility. But God never visits His wrath on anyone until due warning is conveyed to him through an accredited apostle.

2192. God's Mercy gives every chance to the wicked to repent. When wickedness gets so rampant that punishment becomes inevitable, even then God's Mercy and Justice act together. Those who are highly gifted from God—it may be with wealth or position, or it may be with talents and opportunities—are expected to understand and obey. They are given a definite order and warning. If they still transgress there is no further room for argument. They cannot plead that they were ignorant. The command of the Lord is proved against them, and its application is called for beyond doubt. Then it is that their punishment is completed.

2193. *Qawl* here has the sense of word, order, law, charge framed against one under a definite law.

2194. Noah's Flood is taken as a new starting point in history. But even after that hundreds of empires, towns, and generations have perished for their wickedness.

2195. Let not the wicked think, because they are given a lease of life and luxury for a time, that their wickedness has escaped notice. God notes and sees all things, both open and secret. He knows the hidden motives and thoughts of men, and He has no need of any other evidence. His knowledge and sight are all-sufficient.

18. If any do wish  
For the transitory things  
(Of this life), We readily<sup>2196</sup>  
Grant them—such things  
As We will, to such persons  
As We will: in the end  
Have We provided Hell  
For them: they will burn  
Therein, disgraced and rejected.<sup>2197</sup>

١٨- مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْعَاجِلَةَ  
عَجَّلْنَا لَهُ فِيهَا مَا نَشَاءُ لِمَنْ نُرِيدُ  
ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَا لَهُ جَهَنَّمَ  
يُصَلِّهََا مِنْ مُؤَمَّا مَذْ حُورًا ۝

19. Those who do wish  
For the (things of) the  
Hereafter,<sup>2198</sup>  
And strive therefor  
With all due striving,  
And have Faith,—<sup>2199</sup>  
They are the ones  
Whose striving is acceptable  
(To God).

١٩- وَمَنْ أَرَادَ الْآخِرَةَ  
وَسَعَىٰ لَهَا سَعْيَهَا  
وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَأُولَٰئِكَ  
كَانَ سَعْيُهُمْ مَشْكُورًا ۝

20. Of the bounties of thy Lord  
We bestow freely on all—  
These as well as those:  
The bounties of thy Lord  
Are not closed (to anyone).<sup>2200</sup>

٢٠- كُلًّا قَدْ قَدَّمْنَا هُوْلَاءِ ۖ هُوْلَآءِ مِنْ عَطَا  
رَبِّكَ  
وَمَا كَانَ عَطَا رَبِّكَ مَحْظُورًا ۝

21. See how We have bestowed  
More on some than on others;  
But verily the Hereafter  
Is more in rank and gradation

٢١- أَنْظُرْ كَيْفَ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ  
وَلِالْآخِرَةِ أَكْبَرُ دَرَجَاتٍ

2196. An explanation is now given of how it is that prosperity sometimes seems to attend the wicked. The explanation is threefold: (1) the transitory things of this life are worth little in the eternal scheme of things; (2) even they are provided, not just because their recipients wish for them, but according to a definite Plan of God; and (3) in the end there is for the wicked the eternal Misery and deprivation of grace,—the Hell which is worse than destruction in the terms of this world.

2197. All the pride and insolence will then be brought low. The disgrace and the exclusion from the "sight of the Face of God" will by themselves be punishments of which the magnitude cannot be measured in the terms of our present material life.

2198. This is in contrast to the last verse. Those who wish for mere earthly good sometimes get it and misuse it. Those whose eyes are fixed on the Hereafter, they too share in their Lord's bounty provided they fulfil the conditions explained in the next note; but their wishes and endeavours are more acceptable in the sight of God.

2199. A mere wish for moral and spiritual good is not enough. It must be backed up by hard endeavour and supported by a lively Faith. On those conditions the wishes are accepted by God.

2200. God's favours are showered on all,—the just and the unjust, the deserving and the undeserving. But there is a difference as explained in the last two verses.

And more in excellence.<sup>2201</sup>

22. Take not with God  
Another object of worship ;<sup>2202</sup>  
Or thou (O man!) wilt sit  
In disgrace and destitution.<sup>2203</sup>

وَأَكْبَرُ تَقْضِيَةً ۝  
۲۲- لَا تَجْعَلْ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ  
فَتَقْعَدَ مِنْ مُؤْمِنًا تَخْذُلُ وَلَا ۝

C. 129.—To be worthy of the service of the One True God,  
(xvii. 23-40.) We must love and serve His Creatures.

The parents who cherished us in childhood  
Deserve our humble reverence and service : next  
Come the rights of kinsmen, those in want,  
And wayfaring strangers : to each  
According to his need, not in spendthrift show.  
And gentleness is needed to those whom we  
Cannot help. God will provide. He has made  
Life sacred and pure. Fulfil your trusts  
For orphans and deal with all in strictest  
Probity. Pry not into evil from curiosity,  
And shun insolence : for God hates evil,—  
The One, the Good, the Universal Lord !

### SECTION 3.

23. Why Lord hath decreed  
That ye worship none but Him,  
And that ye be kind  
To parents. Whether one  
Or both of them attain  
Old age in thy life,<sup>2204</sup>  
Say not to them a word  
Of contempt, nor repel them,  
But address them  
In terms of honour.

۲۳- وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا لِيَّ ۚ  
وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا  
إِنَّمَا يَنْبَغُ عِنْدَكَ الْكِبَرُ أَحَدُهُمَا  
أَوْ كِلَاهُمَا فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا آيِبٌ وَلَا تَنْهَرُهُمَا  
وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا ۝

2201. Nor should man suppose that all gifts are of equal value. The spiritual ones rank far higher in dignity and real worth than the transitory ones. Therefore it is altogether wrong to compare the worldly prosperity of a wicked man with the apparent want of it to a man of spiritual worth. There is no comparison between them when measured by right standards.

2202. The seeming inequality of gifts to men might make short-sighted men impugn the impartiality of God. But the fault lies with such men's own want of knowledge and want of Faith, There is no excuse for them to seek other objects of worship than God. For there is none worthy of worship except God.

2203. If foolish men turn to false objects of worship, they will not only be disappointed, but they will lose the respect of their own fellow-men, and spiritually they will be reduced to destitution. All their talents and their works will be of no avail.

2204. The spiritual and moral duties are now brought into juxtaposition. We are to worship none but God, because none but God is worthy of worship, not because "the Lord thy God is a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me" (Exod. xx. 5).

Note that the act of worship may be collective as well as individual ; hence the plural *ta'būdū*. The kindness to parents is an individual act of piety ; hence the singular *taqūl, qūl*, etc.

24. And, out of kindness,  
Lower to them the wing<sup>2205</sup>  
Of humility, and say:  
"My Lord! bestow on them  
Thy Mercy even as they  
Cherished me in childhood."<sup>2206</sup>

۲۴- وَأَخْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذَّلِيلِ مِنَ  
الرَّحْمَةِ وَقُلْ رَبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا  
كَمَا رَبَّيْنِي صَغِيرًا

25. Your Lord knoweth best  
What is in your hearts:  
If ye do deeds of righteousness,  
Verily He is Most Forgiving  
To those who turn to Him  
Again and again  
(in true penitence).<sup>2207</sup>

۲۵- رَبُّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا فِي نُفُوسِكُمْ  
إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ أَصْلَابِدِينَ  
وَأَنْتُمْ كَانُوا لِلْآثَابِينَ عَافِينَ

26. And render to the kindred  
Their due rights, as (also)  
To those in want,  
And to the wayfarer:<sup>2208</sup>  
But squander not (your wealth)  
In the manner of a spendthrift.<sup>2209</sup>

۲۶- وَأَنْتَ ذَا الْقُرْبَىٰ حَقُّهُ  
وَالْيَسِيرِينَ وَالْبَيْنِ السَّيِيرِ  
وَلَا تُبْذِرْ تَبْذِيرًا

2205. Cf. xv. 88 and n. 2011. The metaphor is that of a high-flying bird which lowers her wing out of tenderness to her offspring. There is a double aptness. (1) When the parent was strong and the child was helpless, parental affection was showered on the child: when the child grows up and is strong, and the parent is helpless, can he do less than bestow similar tender care on the parent? (2) But more: he must approach the matter with gentle humility: for does not parental love remind him of the great love with which God cherishes His creatures? There is something here more than simple human gratitude: it goes up into the highest spiritual region.

2206. Note that we are asked to honour our father and mother, not "that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee" (Exod. xx 12), but upon much higher and more universal grounds, such as befit a perfected revelation. In the first place, not merely respect, but cherishing kindness, and humility to parents, are commanded. In the second place, this command is bracketed with the command to worship the One True God: parental love should be to us a type of divine love: nothing that we can do can ever really compensate for that which we have received. In the third place (see next verse) our spiritual advancement is tested by this: we cannot expect God's forgiveness if we are rude or unkind to those who unselfishly brought us up.

2207. It is the heart, and its hidden and secret motives, by which we are judged: for God knows them all.

2208. In the Jewish Decalogue, which was given to a primitive and hard-hearted people, this refinement of kindness,—to those in want and to wayfarers (*i.e.* total strangers whom you come across) finds no place. Nor was there much danger of their wasting their substance out of exuberance. Even the command "to honour thy father and mother" comes after the ceremonial observance of the Sabbath. With us, the worship of God is linked up with kindness—to parents, kindred, those in want, those who are far from their homes though they may be total strangers to us. It is not mere verbal kindness. They have certain rights which must be fulfilled.

2209. All charity, kindness, and help are conditioned by our own resources. There is no merit if we merely spend out of bravado or for idle show. How many families are ruined by extravagant expenses at weddings, funerals, etc., or (as they may call it) to "oblige friends or relatives", or to give to able-bodied beggars? To no one was this command more necessary than to Muslims of the present day.

27. Verily spendthrifts are brothers  
Of the Evil Ones;  
And the Evil One  
Is to his Lord (Himself)  
Ungrateful.<sup>2210</sup>

٢٧- إِنَّ الْمُبَذِّرِينَ كَانُوا إِخْوَانَ الشَّيْطَانِ  
وَكَانَ الشَّيْطَانُ لِرَبِّهِ كَفُورًا ۝

28. And even if thou hast  
To turn away from them  
In pursuit of the Mercy  
From thy Lord which thou  
Dost expect, yet speak  
To them a word  
Of easy kindness.<sup>2211</sup>

٢٨- وَإِنَّمَا تُوَفَّقُ عَنْهُمْ  
ابْتِغَاءَ رَحْمَةٍ مِّنَ رَبِّكَ تَرْجُوهَا  
فَقُلْ لَهُمْ قَوْلًا مَّيْسُورًا ۝

29. Make not thy hand tied<sup>2212</sup>  
(Like a niggard's) to thy neck,  
Nor stretch it forth  
To its utmost reach,  
So that thou become  
Blameworthy and destitute.

٢٩- وَلَا تَجْعَلْ يَدَكَ مَغْلُولَةً إِلَىٰ عُنُقِكَ  
وَلَا تَبْسُطْهَا كُلَّ الْبَسْطِ  
فَتَكُونَ مَلُومًا مَّحْسُورًا ۝

30. Verily thy Lord doth provide  
Sustenance in abundance  
For whom He pleaseth, and He  
Provideth in a just measure.<sup>2213</sup>  
For He doth know  
And regard all His servants.

٣٠- إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ  
لِمَن يَشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ  
إِنَّهُ كَانَ بِعِبَادِهِ خَبِيرًا بَصِيرًا ۝

2210. Spendthrifts are not merely fools. They are of the same family as the Evil Ones. And the chief of the Evil Ones (notice the transition from the plural to the singular)—Satan himself—fell by his ingratitude to God. So those who misuse or squander God's gifts are also ungrateful to God.

2211. You may have to "turn away" from people for two reasons. (1) You may not have the wherewithal with which to entertain them and give them their rights; or (2) you may have to give them a wide berth because their thoughts are not as your thoughts. In either case there is no need to speak harshly to them. Your words should be those of "easy kindness", i.e., the sort of kindness (not merely frigid politeness) which flows from pity and understanding and smooths over unnecessary difficulties in human intercourse.

2212. Cf. the phrase for niggardliness in v. 67. We are not to be so lavish as to make ourselves destitute and incur the just censure of wise men, nor is it becoming to keep back our resources from the just needs of those who have a right to our help. Even strangers have such a right, as we saw in xvii. 26 above. But we must keep a just measure between our capacity and other people's needs.

2213. If a foolish spendthrift pretends that his generosity, even if it ruins himself, is good for other people, he is reminded that God will take care of all. He knows every one's true needs and cares for them. He gives in abundance to some, but in all cases He gives in just measure. Who are we to pretend to greater generosity? A foolish Hindi saying was current in Oudh: *jis ko nā de Mauḍā, is ko de Āḡaf-ud-daula*: "To those to whom the Lord gives not, Āḡaf-ud-daula gives". It was extravagance that ruined his family and wiped his kingdom of Oudh off the map.

## SECTION 4.

- 31.
- K**
- ill not your children
- <sup>2214</sup>

For fear of want: We shall  
Provide sustenance for them  
As well as for you.  
Verily the killing of them  
Is a great sin.

۳۱- وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ خَشْيَةً إِنْ لَاقُوا  
تَحْنُ نَرْزُقْهُمْ وَإِيَّاكُمْ  
إِنْ قَتَلْتُمْ كَانَ خَطَاً كَبِيراً ○

32. Nor come nigh to adultery:
- 
- For it is a shameful (deed)
- 
- And an evil, opening the road
- <sup>2215</sup>
- 
- (To other evils).

۳۲- وَلَا تَقْرُبُوا الزَّوَاجَ إِنْهَ كَانَ فَاحِشَةً  
وَسَاءَ سَبِيلًا ○

33. Nor take life—which God
- 
- Has made sacred—except
- 
- For just cause. And if
- 
- Anyone is slain wrongfully,
- 
- We have given his heir
- 
- Authority (to demand Qisās
- <sup>2216</sup>
- 
- Or to forgive): but let him
- 
- Not exceed bounds in the matter
- 
- Of taking life; for he
- 
- Is helped (by the Law).

۳۳- وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا النَّفْسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ  
إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَمَنْ قُتِلَ مَظْلُومًا  
فَقَدْ جَعَلْنَا لَوَلِيِّهِ سُلْطَانًا  
فَلَا يَسْرِفُ فِي الْقَتْلِ  
إِنْهَ كَانَ مَنصُورًا ○

- 34.
- C**
- ome not nigh
- 
- To the orphan's property
- 
- Except to improve it,
- <sup>2217</sup>

۳۴- وَلَا تَقْرُبُوا مَالَ الْيَتِيمِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي  
هِيَ أَحْسَنُ

2214. The Arabs were addicted to female infanticide. In a society perpetually at war a son was a source of strength whereas a daughter was a source of weakness. Even now infanticide is not unknown in other countries for economic reasons. This crime against children's lives is here characterised as one of the greatest of sins.

2215. Literally, "it is evil as a road (or a way)". Adultery is not only shameful in itself and inconsistent with any self-respect or respect for others, but it opens the road to many evils. It destroys the basis of the family; it works against the interests of children born or to be born; it may cause murders and feuds and loss of reputation and property, and also loosen permanently the bonds of society. Not only should it be avoided as a sin, but any approach or temptation to it should be avoided.

2216. On the subject of Qisās see ii. 178 and the notes thereto. Under the strict limitations there laid down, a life may be taken for a life. The heir is given the right to demand the life; but he must not exceed due bounds, because he is helped by the Law. Some Commentators understand "he" in "he is helped (by the Law)" to refer to the heir of the person against whom Qisās is sought. He too will be helped by the Law, if the heir of the first slain exceeds the bounds of Law.

2217. Cf. vi. 152, and other passages relating to orphans, e.g., ii. 220. If an orphan's property is touched at all, it should be to improve it, or to give him something better than he had before,—never to take a personal advantage for the benefit of the guardian. A bargain that may be quite fair as between two independent persons would be, under this verse, unfair as between a guardian and his orphan ward until the latter attains the full age of understanding.



Until he attains the age<sup>2218</sup>  
Of full strength; and fulfil  
(Every)<sup>2219</sup> engagement  
For (every) engagement  
Will be enquired into  
(On the Day of Reckoning).<sup>2220</sup>

حَتَّى يَبْلُغَ أَشُدَّهُ  
وَأَوْفُوا بِالْعَهْدِ  
إِنَّ الْعَهْدَ كَانَ مَسْئُورًا

35. Give full measure when ye  
Measure, and weigh  
With a balance that is straight:  
That is the most fitting  
And the most advantageous  
In the final determination.<sup>2221</sup>

وَأَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ إِذَا كِلْتُمْ  
وَزِنُوا بِالْقِسْطَاسِ الْمُسْتَقِيمِ  
ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا

36. And pursue not that  
Of which thou hast<sup>2222</sup>  
No knowledge; for  
Every act of hearing,  
Or of seeing,  
Or of (feeling in) the heart  
Will be enquired into  
(On the Day of Reckoning).

وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ  
إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ  
وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ  
أُولَئِكَ كَانَ عِنْدَ مَسْئُورٍ

37. Nor walk on the earth<sup>2223</sup>  
With insolence: for thou

وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا إِنَّكَ

2218. *Ashuddun* means the age when the orphan reaches his full maturity of strength and understanding, say between the ages of 18 and 30. The age of legal majority may be 18 (as for certain purposes in India) or 21 (as in England). For certain purposes in Muslim law it may be less than 18. In the orphan's interest a much stricter standard is required in his case.

2219. The definite article *al* has here a generic meaning, and is best translated by "every".

2220. From the context the engagements referred to would relate to beneficial contracts connected with the orphan's property or promises or undertakings given by the guardian or implied in the terms of his appointment. But the words are general and may be interpreted in the general sense. Note that this sentence does not occur in the similar passage in vi. 152, where there was a discussion of social laws: it is appropriate here, where the discussion is about the guardian's personal and individual responsibility in a spiritual sense.

2221. Giving just measure and weight is not only right in itself but is ultimately to the best spiritual and material advantage of the person who gives it.

2222. Idle curiosity may lead us to nose into evil, through our ignorance that it is evil. We must guard against every such danger. We must only hear the things that are known to us to be of good report, and see things that are good and instructive, and entertain in our hearts feelings or in our minds ideas that we have reason to expect will be spiritually profitable to us. We shall be called to account for the exercise of every faculty that has been given to us. This goes a little farther than a famous sculpture on a Japanese temple in which three monkeys are shown as putting their hands to their ears, eyes, and mouths, respectively, to show that they were not prepared to hear any evil, or see any evil, or speak any evil. Here idle curiosity is condemned. Futility is to be avoided even if it does not reach the degree of positive evil.

2223. Insolence, or arrogance, or undue elation at our powers or capacities, is the first step to many evils. Besides, it is unjustified. All our gifts are from God.

Canst not rend the earth  
Asunder, nor reach  
The mountains in height.

38. Of all such things  
The evil is hateful  
In the sight of thy Lord.

39. These are among the (precepts  
Of) wisdom, which thy Lord  
Has revealed to thee.<sup>2224</sup>  
Take not, with God,  
Another object of worship,  
Lest thou shouldst be thrown  
Into Hell, blameworthy and  
rejected.<sup>2225</sup>

40. Has then your Lord,  
(O Pagans!) preferred for you  
Sons, and taken for Himself  
Daughters among the angels? <sup>2226</sup>  
Truly ye utter  
A most dreadful saying!

لَنْ تَخْرُقَ الْأَرْضَ  
وَلَنْ تَبْلُغَ الْجِبَالَ طُولًا ۝

۝ كُلُّ ذَلِكَ كَانَ سَيِّئُهُ

عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ مَكْرُوهًا ۝

۝ ۳۹- ذَلِكَ مِمَّا أَوْحَى إِلَيْكَ

رَبُّكَ مِنَ الْحِكْمَةِ ۝

وَلَا تَجْعَلْ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ

فَتُلْقَى فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَلُومًا مَذْمُورًا ۝

۝ ۴۰- أَفَأَفَضَلْتُمْ رَبَّكُمْ بِالْبَنِينَ

وَاتَّخَذَ مِنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنَاثًا

۝ إِنَّكُمْ لَتَقُولُونَ قَوْلًا عَظِيمًا ۝

C. 130.—There is none like unto God. Exalted  
(xvii. 41-60.) Beyond measure is He. All Creation  
Declares His glory. His revelation  
Is Truth, but is beyond comprehension  
To those who believe not in the Hereafter.  
Those who serve Him should beware  
Lest words unseemly should escape them,  
Whether to friend or foe. Avoid  
Dissensions, and know that God's Wrath  
When kindled is a terrible thing,  
But we rejoice that He forbears and forgives.

2224. The moral law, as expounded in xvii. 23-39 is far in advance of the bare Decalogue in that it searches out motives, and draws pointed attention to the weak and helpless if we are to reach any spiritual understanding of God. It begins with a mention of the worship of the One True God and ends with a similar mention to close the argument, thus emphasizing the fact that the love of God embraces the love of man and practical help to our fellow-creatures.

2225. "Blameworthy" carries us back by reminiscence to xvii. 29, between which and this verse there is mention of crimes committed out of covetousness and a selfish disregard of other people's rights. "Rejected" carries back our reminiscence to xvii. 18, from which to here we have a reference to crimes that lead to deprivation of God's grace. The latter is of course wider than the former. Note how subtly the two streams of thought are here conjoined.

2226. Cf. xvi. 57-59. Insistence on true worship means also exclusion of false worship or worship derogatory to God. In circles where daughters were despised and even their lives had to be protected by special legislation, what could have been more dreadful than ascribing daughters to God?

## SECTION 5.

41. **W**e have explained (things)  
In various (ways) in this Qur-an,  
In order that they may receive<sup>2227</sup>  
Admonition, but it only increases  
• Their flight (from the Truth)!

42. Say : if there had been  
(Other) gods with Him,—  
As they say,—behold,  
They would certainly have  
Sought out a way  
To the Lord of the Throne !<sup>2228</sup>

43. Glory to Him ! He is high  
Above all that they say !—  
Exalted and Great (beyond  
measure) !

44. The seven heavens and the earth,  
And all beings therein,  
Declare His glory :  
There is not a thing  
But celebrates His praise ;  
And yet ye understand not  
How they declare His glory !<sup>2229</sup>  
Verily He is Oft-Forbearing,  
Most Forgiving !

45. **W**hen thou dost recite  
The Qur-an, We put,

۴۱- وَلَقَدْ صَرَّفْنَا فِي هَٰذَا الْقُرْآنِ لِيَذَّكَّرُوا  
وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُونَ إِلَّا نَجْفُورًا ۝

۴۲- قُلْ لَوْ كَانَ مَعَهُ آلِهَةٌ  
كَمَا يَقُولُونَ إِذْ الْأَبْتَعُوا  
إِلَىٰ ذِي الْعَرْشِ سَبِيلًا ۝

۴۳- مُبَشِّرًا وَتَعْلَىٰ عَمَّا يَقُولُونَ  
عُلُوًّا كَبِيرًا ۝

۴۴- تَسُبِّحُ لَهُ السَّمَوَاتُ السَّبْعُ وَالْأَرْضُ  
وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ ۚ  
وَإِنْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا يَسْبِّحُ بِحَمْدِ  
وَلَكِنْ لَا تَفْقَهُونَ تَسْبِيحَهُمْ  
إِنَّهُ كَانَ حَلِيمًا غَفُورًا ۝

۴۵- وَإِذَا قُرِئَ الْقُرْآنُ جَعَلْنَا

2227. Things are explained in the Qur-ān from all points of view, individual and national, by means of stories, parables, and figures of speech, and by way of categorical commands. But those who are evil, instead of profiting by such instruction, often go farther and farther away from the Truth.

2228. There is only One True God. But if, as polytheists say, there had been subsidiary gods, they would yet have had to go to the Throne of the Supreme God, for they could have done nothing without Him. Thus the Islamic idea of the unity of the Godhead is quite different from polytheistic ideas of a supreme god, as in the Greek Pantheon, where Jupiter was often defied by the minor deities ! But such ideas are absurd, as stated in the next verse.

2229. All Creation, animate and inanimate, sings God's praises and celebrates His glory,—animate, with consciousness, and inanimate, in the evidence which it furnishes of the unity and glory of God. The mystics believe that there is a soul in inanimate things also, which declares forth the glory of God. For all Nature bears witness to His power, wisdom, and goodness. It is only "ye", i.e., those who reject the whole trend of your nature and deny Faith simply because ye have been given a limited amount of choice and free-will,—it is only such as "ye" that understand not what every other creature understands and proclaims with joy and pride. What must be your degradation ! And yet God bears with you and forgives you ! Such is His goodness !

Between thee and those who  
Believe not in the Hereafter,  
A veil invisible ; <sup>2230</sup>

46. And We put coverings  
Over their hearts (and minds)  
Lest they should understand  
The Qur-ān, and deafness <sup>2231</sup>  
Into their ears : when thou  
Dost commemorate thy Lord—  
And Him alone—in the Qur-ān,  
They turn on their backs,  
Fleeing (from the Truth).

47. We know best why it is  
They listen, when they listen <sup>2232</sup>  
To thee; and when they  
Meet in private conference,  
Behold, the wicked say,  
"Ye follow none other than  
A man bewitched!"

48. See what similes they strike  
For thee : but they have gone  
Astray, and never can they  
Find a way. <sup>2233</sup>

49. They say : "What!  
When we are reduced

بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ  
حِجَابًا مَسْتُورًا ٥

٣٦- وَجَعَلْنَا عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ  
أَكِنَّةً أَنْ يَفْقَهُوهُ وَفِي آذَانِهِمْ وَقْرًا  
وَإِذَا ذُكِّرْتُمْ بَلَغَتْ فِي الْقُرْآنِ عُتْدَةً  
لَكُمْ أَلَىٰ أَبْصَارِهِمْ تُعْوَرًا ٥

٣٧- نَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَسْتَمِعُونَ بِهِ إِذْ  
يَسْتَمِعُونَ إِلَيْكَ وَإِذْ هُمْ يُخَوِّى  
إِذْ يَقُولُ الظَّالِمُونَ  
إِنْ تَسْمِعُونَهُ إِلَّا رَجُلًا مَسْحُورًا ٥

٣٨- أَنْظِرْ كَيْفَ ضَرَبُوا لَكَ الْأَمْثَالَ  
فَضَلُّوا فَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ سَبِيلًا ٥

٣٩- وَقَالُوا إِنْ كُنَّا

2230. *Veil invisible*: Some Commentators understand *masṭūr* here as equivalent to *sāṭir*: a veil that makes invisible, a thick or dark veil. But I think that the meaning of *masṭūr* (in the passive voice) as "hidden or invisible" is more consonant with the mystic meaning of the whole passage. If all nature, external and within ourselves, declares God's glory, those unfortunates who cut themselves off from their better nature are isolated from the men of God and the revelation of God, because (1) they are unfit for being in their company, and (2) because the men of God and the revelation of God must be protected from the pain which blasphemy or rebellion must cause to their unsullied nature. The veil is none the less real because it is invisible.

2231. The invisible veil being put against the ungodly on account of their deliberate rejection of Truth, the result is that their minds are fogged so that they cannot understand and their ears are clogged so that they cannot hear. In other words the effects of Evil become cumulative in shutting out God's grace.

2232. See last note. That being so, the only motive for the ungodly to listen to God's Truth is to scoff at it instead of to be instructed by it. They may make a show of listening, but when they meet together in private, they show themselves in their true colours. Cf. ii. 14. They cannot help seeing that there is singular charm and attractiveness in God's Word, and that it consoles, helps, and elevates many people who receive it in the right spirit. So they pretend that they are superior to such people and laugh at them for listening to some one who is only under the influence of something which they call magic!

2233. Note that the word used is "Sabīlan" "a way", not "the way". In going astray they have lost the way; but never can they find any means of getting back to that way, or of justifying themselves or making good their wicked similes.

To bones and dust,  
Should we really be raised up  
(To be) a new creation? " 2234

50. Say: "(Nay!) be ye  
Stones or iron,

51. "Or created matter  
Which, in your minds,  
Is hardest (to be raised up),—  
(Yet shall ye be raised up)!"  
Then will they say:  
"Who will cause us  
To return?" Say: "He  
Who created you first!"  
Then will they wag  
Their heads towards thee, 2235  
And say, "When will  
That be?" Say, "Maybe  
It will be quite soon!"

52. "It will be on a Day  
When He will call you,  
And ye will answer  
(His call) with (words  
Of) His praise, and ye 2236  
Will think that ye tarried  
But a little while!" 2237

عِظَامًا وَرُفَاتًا  
أَمْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ لَتُبْعَوْنَ خَلْقًا جَدِيدًا ٥٠

هـ- قُلْ كُونُوا حِجَارَةً أَوْ حَدِيدًا ٥١

هـ- أَوْ خَلْقًا مِمَّا يَكْبُرُ فِي صُدُورِكُمْ ٥٢

فَسَيَقُولُونَ مَنْ يُعِيدُنَا

قُلِ الَّذِي فَطَرَكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ ٥٣

فَسَيُنْغِصُونَ إِلَيْكَ رُءُوسَهُمْ

وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَى هُوَ ٥٤

قُلْ عَسَى أَنْ يَكُونَ قَرِيبًا ٥٥

هـ- يَوْمَ يَدْعُوكُمْ

فَتَسْتَجِيبُونَ بِحَمْدِهِ ٥٦

وَتُظْهِرُونَ أَنْ لَيْسَ تُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ٥٧

2234. They do not realise that God Who created them once out of nothing can create them again and again, with memories of their past, and in order to render to Him an account of how they used or misused the talents and opportunities which they were given. If it is to be a new Creation, what then? Bones and dust or ashes may yet retain something of the personality which was enshrined in them. But even if they were reduced to stones or iron or anything which their minds can conceive of as being most unlike them, yet there is nothing impossible to God! He has clearly sent a Message that we shall have to render an account of ourselves, and His Message is necessarily true.

2235. The sceptic shifts his ground when he is cornered in argument. It is no longer tenable for him to say that it cannot happen or that there is no one who can bring him back to life and memory. He now gets shaky, and says, "Well, when is that going to happen?" The actual time no man can tell. Indeed that event will be on a plane in which there will be no Time. Our relative ideas of time and place will have been completely overthrown, and it will appear to us then, not that it has been postponed too long, but that it has come too soon! See the next verse and note.

2236. It may be that this verse should not be in the inverted commas governed by the verb "say", in the last clause of the last verse. In that case, the answer to the sceptic would be finished in the last verse, and this verse would be a general statement applying also to the righteous, who will rise up celebrating the praises of God. But on the whole, I think it is better to take this verse as part of the answer to the sceptic referred to in the last verse.

2237. Whatever may have been your spiritual blindness in this life, the "new creation" will have opened your eyes to the Truth. No one will any longer be in any delusion as regards the Reality of God, and all will be forced, by their new circumstances, to recognise the Truth and sing God's praises. And all will be surprised at the seemingly short flight of time since they had their little ephemeral life on this earth. They will now appraise its true worth.

## SECTION 6.

53. Say to My servants  
That they should (only) say  
Those things that are best :<sup>2238</sup>  
For Satan doth sow  
Dissensions among them :  
For Satan is to man  
An avowed enemy.
54. It is your Lord  
That knoweth you best :  
If He please, He granteth<sup>2239</sup>  
You mercy, or if He please,  
Punishment : We have not sent  
Thee to be a disposer  
Of their affairs for them.
55. And it is your Lord  
That knoweth best all beings  
That are in the heavens<sup>2240</sup>  
And on earth : We  
Did bestow on some Prophets  
More (and other) gifts  
Than on others : and We gave  
To David (the gift  
Of) the Psalms.<sup>2241</sup>

٥٣. وَقُلْ لِعِبَادِي يَقُولُوا الَّتِي هِيَ  
أَحْسَنُ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ يَنْزِعُ بَيْنَهُمْ  
إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ كَانَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ عَدُوًّا  
مُبِينًا ۝

٥٤. رَبُّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِكُمْ  
إِنْ يَشَأْ يُرْسِلْكُمْ  
أَوْ إِنْ يَشَأْ يُعَذِّبْكُمْ  
وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَكِيلًا ۝

٥٥. وَرَبُّكَ أَعْلَمُ  
بِمَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ  
وَلَقَدْ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَ النَّبِيِّينَ عَلَى بَعْضٍ  
وَأَتَيْنَا دَاوُدَ رُجُومًا ۝

2238. This command refers to two situations. (1) Even to your enemies and the enemies of God you should speak fair : who are you to judge others? Judgment belongs to God alone, for He knows you (*i.e.* all mankind) best, and your personal knowledge is at best imperfect. And Satan is always trying to divide mankind. (2) Amongst yourselves, also, you should not entertain suspicions, but speak politely according to the best standards of human-speech. A false or unkind word may destroy all your efforts at building up unity, because the forces of disruption are more numerous than the forces of unity.

2239. Man should never for a single moment entertain a thought that would imply that he was wiser than God. God's knowledge is all-embracing. If He grants mercy to some that you consider wicked or punishment to some that you consider righteous, it is your knowledge or your deductions that are at fault, not God's righteous Plan. Even men of God are not sent to arrange or dispose of men's affairs, but only to teach God's Message. How much less can ordinary men presume to judge other men? The *Mashiyat*—Will and Plan of God—is above all human wisdom.

2240. Not only are we not to judge other ordinary men and carp at them. We are not to set up false standards for judging the men of God. If one was born of the unlearned Arab race, he yet was a Mercy to all the worlds. If one spoke to God as *Kalīmullah* or another's life as *Rūb-ullah* began with a spiritual miracle; it does not imply superiority. It only means that God's wisdom is more profound than we can fathom.

2241. The spiritual gifts with which the prophets came may themselves take different forms, according to the needs of the world and the times in which they lived, as judged by the wisdom of God. A striking example here given is the gift of song and music as given to David, but it implies no superiority of David over others. David was given the *Zabūr*, the Psalter or Psalms, intended to be sung for the worship of God and the celebration of God's praise. For the Book of Psalms, see the last part of n. 669 to iv. 163, where exactly the same words are used about David.

56. Say : " Call on those—  
Besides Him—whom ye fancy :  
They have neither the power  
To remove your troubles  
From you nor to change them. " <sup>2242</sup>

57. Those whom they call upon  
Do desire (for themselves) means  
Of access to their Lord,—  
Even those who are nearest : <sup>2243</sup>  
They hope for His Mercy  
And fear His Wrath :  
For the Wrath of thy Lord  
Is something to take heed of.

58. There is not a population  
But We shall destroy it  
Before the Day of Judgment  
Or punish it with  
A dreadful Penalty : <sup>2244</sup>  
That is written  
In the (eternal) Record.

59. And We refrain from sending  
The Signs, only because  
The men of former generations  
Treated them as false : <sup>2245</sup>

٥٦- قُلْ ادْعُوا الَّذِينَ زَعَمْتُمْ مِنْ دُونِهِ  
فَلَا يَمْلِكُونَ كَشْفَ الظُّلُمِ عَنْكُمْ  
وَلَا تَحْيِيلاً

٥٧- أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ يَبْتَغُونَ  
إِلَى رَبِّهِمُ الْوَسِيلَةَ إِلَيْهِمْ أَقْرَبُ  
وَيَرْجُونَ رَحْمَتَهُ وَيَخَافُونَ عَذَابَهُ  
إِنَّ عَذَابَ رَبِّكَ كَانَ مَحْذُورًا

٥٨- وَإِنْ مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ إِلَّا نَحْنُ مُهْلِكُوهَا  
قَبْلَ يَوْمِ الرِّيمَةِ أَوْ مُعَذِّبُوهَا عَذَابًا  
شَدِيدًا  
كَانَ ذَلِكَ فِي الْكِتَابِ مَسْطُورًا

٥٩- وَمَا مَنَعَنَا أَنْ نُرْسِلَ بِالْآيَاتِ إِلَّا  
أَنَّ كَذَبَ بِهَا الْأَوَّلُونَ

2242. Men's suspicions of each other or of the prophets have been condemned in the previous verses. We now have the strongest condemnation of all, that of imagining any other being as being equal or in the same category with the One True God. God has all power: they have no power. They cannot remove men's troubles. They cannot even mitigate or change them so as to afford the least relief. Why indulge in false worship?

2243. Where men or heroes, or prophets or angels are worshipped, the worship is futile; because (1) even if they are good and holy, and ever so near to God, yet the nearest of them have need to seek means of access to God, and they do seek such means, viz.: the hope of God's Grace; (2) though by their very nature it is impossible for us to suppose that they will incur the Wrath of God, yet they are but creatures and are subject to the law of personal responsibility.

2244. These verses are a commentary on the last clause of the last verse. "The Wrath of thy Lord is something to take heed of." The godless thoughtlessly challenge God's Wrath, but do they realise its nature? Even the best of us must be moved with terror when we think of its consequences, were it not for His unbounded Mercy. Those who deny the Hereafter fail to realise its terrible Portents. They ask for Portents and Miracles now, but do they realise that their coming means destruction and misery to those who reject faith? They will come soon enough. The whole world will be convulsed before the Day of Judgment. The part of the wise is to prepare for it.

2245. Past generations treated Signs and Portents with contempt or rebellion, and brought about their own undoing. It is only God's Mercy that gives them Grace for a time and prevents the coming of those Portents and Punishments which would overwhelm them if they were put to their trial at once.

We sent the She-camel<sup>2246</sup>  
To the Thamūd to open  
Their eyes, but they  
Treated her wrongfully :  
We only send the Signs  
By way of terror  
(And warning from evil).<sup>2247</sup>

وَاتَيْنَا ثَمُودَ النَّاقَةَ  
مُجْبِرَةً فَبُذِلُوا بِهَا  
وَمَا نُزِيلُ بِالْآيَاتِ إِلَّا تَخَوِيفًا ۝

60. Behold ! We told thee  
That thy Lord doth encompass  
Mankind round about :<sup>2248</sup>  
We granted the Vision  
Which We showed thee,<sup>2249</sup>  
But as a trial for men,—  
As also the Cursed Tree<sup>2250</sup>  
(Mentioned) in the Qur-an :  
We put terror (and warning)  
Into them, but it only  
Increases their inordinate  
transgression !

وَلِذَلِكَ إِنَّا لَمَّا لَكَ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ أَحَاطَ بِالنَّاسِ  
وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الزُّبُرَ الَّتِي آتَيْنَاكَ  
إِلَّا فِتْنَةً لِلنَّاسِ  
وَالشَّجَرَةَ الْمَلْعُونَةَ فِي الْقُرْآنِ  
وَنُخَوِّفُهُمْ قَمَا يَرِيدُ هُمْ  
إِلَّا طُغْيَانًا كَبِيرًا ۝

2246. An example is cited from the story of the Thamūd. A wonderful She-camel was sent among them as a Portent and a Symbol. In their wickedness they ham-strung her. So instead of her reclaiming them she was a cause of their destruction, as their sin and rebellion were laid bare. For the story of the She-camel and the references to the passages in which she is mentioned, see n. 1044 to vii. 73.

2247. Signs, Miracles, and Portents are sent by God as a warning, to strike terror into the hearts of evil-doers and reclaim them to the right path. I have discussed Fear as a motive for reclaiming certain kinds of hard hearts, in my note 82 to ii. 74. But some hearts are so hard that even this motive does not work. As they have a limited free-will given by God, they are to that extent free to choose. But when they actually choose evil, God in His infinite Mercy delays their punishment and removes the occasion for their immediate self-destruction by withholding the Signs which might make them transgress all the more and compass their total destruction.

2248. The reference may be to lxxii. 28, probably an earlier Meccan revelation. But the argument is independent of time. This verse falls naturally into three divisions. Warnings and Portents and Signs are sent or not sent according to God's All-Wise Plan of Mercy and Justice : this is in no wise inconsistent with the apparent freedom given to the wicked : because (1) in any case God is all round all His creatures, and His delay as a Sign of Mercy in no way diminishes His power ; (2) the Visions of Truth vouchsafed to men of God are themselves Signs by which they can warn the ungodly ; and (3) sometimes it is more merciful to give them time by not immediately bringing the matter to judgment.

2249. Some Commentators take this as referring to the Mi'rāj (xvii. 1) and others to other spiritual visions. Such visions are miracles, and become a stumbling block to unbelievers.

2250. The tree Zaqqūm, a bitter and pungent tree described as growing at the bottom of Hell, a type of all that is disagreeable. See xxxvii. 62-65 ; xlv. 43-46 ; and lvi. 52. All these are Sūras chronologically earlier than this sūra. The application of the name to a tree of the myrobalan kind in the region of Jericho is, I think, of post-Quranic date.

Why is it a trial for men ? See xxxvii. 63 and n. 4073.



C. 131.—Arrogance, jealousy, spite, and hatred  
(xvii. 61-84.) Were the cause of the fall of Iblis. Man  
Was given pre-eminence above  
Much of God's Creation, and owes  
Higher responsibilities. He should give thanks  
For God's mercies, and remember  
The Day of Account. Not all the scheming  
Of Evil will deflect God's righteous Plan  
To protect His chosen ones. They should pray  
Without ceasing, and seek His true Guidance;  
For Truth will last, but Falsehood will perish.

## SECTION 7.

61. Behold! We said to the  
angels: <sup>2251</sup>  
"Bow down unto Adam":  
They bowed down except Iblis:  
He said, "Shall I bow down  
To one whom Thou didst create  
From clay?"

62. He said, "Seest Thou? This is  
The one whom Thou hast honoured  
Above me! If Thou wilt but  
Respite me to the Day  
Of Judgment, I will surely  
Bring his descendants  
Under my sway—  
All but a few!" <sup>2252</sup>

63. (God) said: "Go thy way; <sup>2253</sup>  
If any of them follow thee,  
Verily Hell will be  
The recompense of you (all)—  
An ample recompense.

٦١- وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ  
سَجْدًا وَآلَا إِبْلِيسَ  
قَالَ ءَسَجِدُ لِمَنْ خَلَقْتُ طِينًا ۝

٦٢- قَالَ أَرَأَيْتَكَ هَذَا الَّذِي كَرَّمْتَ  
عَلَيَّ لَكِنِ أَخَّرْتَنِي إِلَى يَوْمِ  
الْقِيَامَةِ لَأُحْتَنِكَنَّ ذُرِّيَّتَهُ  
إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ۝

٦٣- قَالَ اذْهَبْ فَمَنْ تَبِعَكَ مِنْهُمْ  
فَأَن جَهَنَّمَ جَزَاءُكُمْ جَزَاءً  
مُّوَفَّوْرًا ۝

2251. Cf. vii. 11-18, which deals, as is the case here, with the temptation of the individual human soul, while ii. 30-38 deals with the collective race of man through Adam. Arrogance, jealousy, spite, and hatred are the ingredients in the story of Iblis.

2252. The power of Evil over man is due to man's limited free-will. In other words man hands himself to Evil. As to those who loyally worship and serve God, Evil has no power over them. This is expressly mentioned in verse 65 below, and in other places.

2253. The power of Evil is summarily dismissed, but not without a clear warning. "Do thy worst; if any of them misuse their limited free-will and deliberately follow thee, they must take the consequences with thee; all of you must answer according to your personal responsibility."

64. "Lead to destruction those  
Whom thou canst among them,<sup>2254</sup>  
With thy (seductive) voice;<sup>2255</sup>  
Make assaults on them<sup>2256</sup>  
With thy cavalry and thy  
Infantry; mutually share  
With them wealth and children;<sup>2257</sup>  
And make promises to them."  
But Satan promises them  
Nothing but deceit.<sup>2258</sup>

٦٤- وَأَسْتَفْزِزُ مَنِ اسْتَطَعْتَ مِنْهُمْ  
بِصَوْتِكَ وَأَجْلِبْ عَلَيْهِمْ  
بِخَيْبِكَ وَرِجْلِكَ وَشَارِكْهُمْ  
فِي الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَوْلَادِ وَعَدَّهُمْ  
وَمَا يَعِدُهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ إِلَّا غُرُورًا ○

65. "As for My servants,<sup>2259</sup>  
No authority shalt thou  
Have over them:"  
Enough is thy Lord  
For a Disposer of affairs.<sup>2260</sup>

٦٥- إِنْ عِبَادِي لَيْسَ لَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ  
سُلْطَانٌ وَكَفَى بِرَبِّكَ ذِكْرًا ○

66. Our Lord is He  
That maketh the Ship  
Go smoothly for you  
Through the sea, in order that  
Ye may seek of His Bounty.<sup>2261</sup>  
For He is unto you  
Most Merciful.

٦٦- رَبُّكُمْ الَّذِي يُزَيِّجُ لَكُمْ الْفَلَكَ  
فِي الْبَحْرِ لَتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ  
إِنَّهُ كَانَ بِكُمْ رَحِيمًا ○

67. When distress seizes you  
At sea, those that ye  
Call upon—besides Himself—  
Leave you in the lurch!  
But when He brings you back  
Safe to land, ye turn

٦٧- وَإِذَا مَسَّكُمُ الضُّرُّ فِي الْبَحْرِ ضَلَّ  
مِنْ تَدْعُوْنِ إِلَّا رَأْيَاهُ  
فَلَمَّا بَلَغْتُمْ إِلَى الْبَرِّ ائْتَرَضْتُمْ

2254. "Do thy worst; but ye are both warned that that path leads to destruction."

2255. Evil has many snares for mankind. The one that is put in the foreground is the voice,—the seductive personal appeal, that "makes the worse appear the better part".

2256. The forcible assault of Evil is next mentioned under the metaphor of cavalry and infantry. It is when cajolery and tempting fair-seeming seem to fail that an attack is made in force with weapons of violence, of all kinds, like the different arms in an organised army.

2257. If the first assaults are resisted, Evil has other weapons in its armoury. Tangible fruits are dangled before the eyes, ill-gotten gains and children of sin, that follow from certain very alluring methods of indulgence in passions. Or it may be children dedicated to sin or worldly gains, etc. And then there are all kinds of promises for the future.

2258. This is a parenthetical clause inserted to show up what the promises of the Evil One are worth.

2259. This verse should be read along with the two preceding ones to complete their meaning. Evil has no power except over those who yield to its solicitations.

2260. As Evil has no authority over the sincere servants of God, they should put their trust completely in Him. For He is All-Sufficient to carry out their affairs, and by His grace, to save them from all harm and danger.

2261. This illustration of the sea, and the skill with which, by God's grace, men pass through it with ease in order to earn material gains by commerce, social gains by human intercourse, and spiritual gains by knowledge, is frequently used to enforce God's goodness to man. Cf. ii. 164.

Away (from Him). Most  
ungrateful <sup>2262</sup>  
Is man !

وَكَانَ الْإِنْسَانُ كُفُورًا ۝

68. Do ye then feel secure  
That He will not cause you  
To be swallowed up  
Beneath the earth <sup>2263</sup>  
When ye are on land,  
Or that He will not send  
Against you a violent tornado  
(With showers of stones)  
So that ye shall find  
No one to carry out  
Your affairs for you ?

٦٨- أَفَأَمِنْتُمْ أَنْ يُخَسِفَ بِكُمْ  
جَانِبَ الْبَرِّ  
أَوْ يُرْسِلَ عَلَيْكُمْ حَاصِبًا  
ثُمَّ لَا تَجِدُوا  
لَكُمْ وَكِيلًا ۝

69. Or do ye feel secure  
That He will not send you  
Back a second time  
To sea and send against you  
A heavy gale to drown you  
Because of your ingratitude, <sup>2264</sup>  
So that ye find no helper  
Therein against Us ?

٦٩- أَمْ أَمِنْتُمْ أَنْ يُعِيدَ كُمْ فِيهِ تَارَةً  
أُخْرَى فَيُرْسِلَ عَلَيْكُمْ قَاصِفًا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ  
فَيُغْرِغَكُمْ بِمَا كُفَرْتُمْ  
ثُمَّ لَا تَجِدُوا لَكُمْ عَلَيْنَاهُ تَبِيعًا ۝

70. We have honoured the sons  
Of Adam ; provided them  
With transport on land and sea ;  
Given them for sustenance things  
Good and pure ; and conferred  
On them special favours,  
Above a great part  
Of Our Creation. <sup>2265</sup>

٧٠- وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ  
وَحَمَلْنَاهُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ  
وَرَزَقْنَاهُمْ مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَفَضَّلْنَاهُمْ  
عَلَى كَثِيرٍ مِمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا تَفْضِيلًا ۝

2262. Against God's gracious gifts and mercies is contrasted man's ingratitude. In danger he remembers the One true God, but relapses into his own fancies when the danger is past. Cf. also x. 22-23.

2263. Man is safe neither on land nor at sea except by the grace and mercy of God. How forcibly this is brought home to us by the Quetta earthquake of 31st May 1935, when tens of thousands of men, women and children perished in a few moments, by night, buried in the debris ! The stories of violent destructive tornadoes in such areas as the southern United States are equally impressive. The destruction is so sudden that the victims have no time to arrange anything. They are simply wiped out.

2264. If a man flees from the Wrath of God, there is no place secure for him. He may flee from sea to land, and back again from land to sea. But his life depends on the Disposer of all affairs. He may go again and again to sea, and perhaps finally end by being drowned.

2265. The distinction and honour conferred by God on man are recounted in order to enforce the corresponding duties and responsibilities of man. He is raised to a position of honour above the brute creation ; he has been granted talents by which he can transport himself from place to place by land, sea, and now by air ; all the means for the sustenance and growth of every part of his nature are provided by God ; and his spiritual faculties (the greatest gift of God) raise him above the greater part of God's Creation. Should he not then realise his noble destiny and prepare for his real life in the Hereafter ?

## SECTION 8.

71. One day We shall call  
Together all human beings  
With their (respective) Imāms: <sup>2266</sup>  
Those who are given their record  
In their right hand  
Will read it (with pleasure),  
And they will not be  
Dealt with unjustly  
In the least. <sup>2267</sup>

٤٠-يَوْمَ نَدْعُوا كُلَّ أُنَاسٍ بِإِمَامِهِمْ  
فَمَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَابَهُ يَمِينًا  
فَاوْلَئِكَ يَفْرَهُونَ كِتَابَهُمْ  
وَلَا يَظْلَمُونَ قَبِيلًا ۝

72. But those who were blind  
In this world, will be  
Blind in the Hereafter, <sup>2268</sup>  
And most astray  
From the Path.

٤١-وَمَنْ كَانَ فِي هَذِهِ أَعْمَى  
فَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ أَعْمَى  
وَاضَلُّ سَبِيلًا ۝

73. And their purpose was  
To tempt thee away  
From that which We  
Had revealed unto thee,  
To substitute in Our name  
Something quite different: <sup>2269</sup>  
(In that case), behold!  
They would certainly have  
Made thee (their) friend!

٤٢-وَإِنْ كَادُوا لَيَفْتِنُونَكَ عَنِ الَّذِي  
أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ  
لِتَفْتَرِيَ عَلَيْنَا غَيْرَةً  
وَرَأَوْا لَا تَحْذُرُكَ خَلِيلًا ۝

74. And had We not  
Given thee strength,

٤٣-وَلَوْلَا أَنْ ثَبَّتْنَاكَ

2266. I have discussed the various meanings of *Imām* in ii. 124, n. 124. What is the meaning here? The Commentators are divided. Some understand the meaning to be that each People or Group will appear with its Leader, who will bear witness to its virtues or sins: Cf. xvi. 84. Another view is that the Imām is its revelation, their Book. A third is that the Imām is the record of deeds spoken of in the next clause. I prefer the first.

2267. Literally, by the value of a *fatīl*, a small skin in the cleft of a date-stone: this has no value.

2268. On the Judgment Day the children of light will receive and peruse their record, and will render joyful thanks to God for His Mercies. What of the children of darkness? They had already been blind in this world's life, and they will not receive the light of God's Countenance then. On the contrary they will find that the longer the time they have travelled, the farther away they have gone from the Path. Notice the association of ideas—blindness, not seeing the light, going farther and farther away from the true Path.

2269. It happens with men of God, and it happened with the holy Prophet, that they are tempted by the world with many things which appeal to the world generally, if they would make some small concession in their favour. The "small concession" may hold the key of the position, and neutralise the whole teaching sent by God. If the Prophet had accepted wealth and position among the Quraish and "only respected" their idols! The Quraish would have taken him into their inner circle! A dishonest liar like Musailama would have jumped at the opportunity and been hailed as a friend and associate and made much of. But men of God are made of sterner stuff. They are given special strength to resist all plausible deception.

Thou wouldst nearly  
Have inclined to them <sup>2270</sup>  
A little.

75. In that case We should  
Have made thee taste  
An equal portion (of punishment)  
In this life, and an equal portion <sup>2271</sup>  
In death: and moreover  
Thou wouldst have found  
None to help thee against Us! <sup>2272</sup>

76. Their purpose was to scare  
Thee off the land, <sup>2273</sup>  
In order to expel thee;  
But in that case they  
Would not have stayed  
(Therein) after thee,  
Except for a little while.

77. (This was Our) way  
With the apostles We sent  
Before thee: thou wilt find  
No change in Our ways. <sup>2274</sup>

#### SECTION 9.

78. Establish regular prayers— <sup>2275</sup>  
At the sun's decline

لَقَدْ كُنْتَ تَرْكُنْ إِلَيْهِمْ شَيْئًا قَلِيلًا ۝

٤٥- إِذَا الْكَذَّبْتَكَ  
ضَعُفَ الْحَيَوةُ وَضَعُفَ الْمَوْتَ  
ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُكَ عَلَيْنَا أَصِيرًا ۝

٤٦- وَإِنْ كَادُوا لَيَسْتَفْرِزُونَكَ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ  
لَيُخْرِجُونَكَ مِنْهَا وَإِذَا لَا يَلْبَثُونَ  
خَلْقَكَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ۝

٤٧- سُنَّةٌ مَن قَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا قَبْلَكَ مِنْ  
رُسُلِنَا وَلَا تَجِدُ لِسُنَّتِنَا تَحْوِيلًا ۝

٤٨- أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِ الْأَقَامِسِ

2270. From a purely human point of view it may seem policy to make a small "concession" to men's weakness in order to fulfil a divine mission. But the divine Messenger is given special strength to resist such temptations.

2271. If such a thing was possible for a true Apostle of God, viz.: a compromise with evil and a dereliction of his mission, he would be no exception to the law of personal responsibility. Indeed, as the power and the responsibility were greater, the punishment would have been greater too. It would have been double,—an exposure in this life and the usual punishment in or after death for a desertion of the Truth.

2272. The motive held out by the world for a compromise with Truth is itself fallacious. The motive is that the compromise may bring influence, position, and opportunity, if not wealth and the other good things of life. But these themselves (if attained) would be of no use or help if pitted against the command of God.

2273. As happened in the case of the holy Prophet, the enemies try to frighten the man of God away from their midst, so that, once away, they could expel him and keep him out. But they are counting without the Plan of God. If they persecute the righteous, they dig their own graves!

2274. This was no new thing in history. God protects His own, and the ungodly cannot long enjoy the fruits of their unrighteousness even if their punishment be delayed a little while.

2275. The Commentators understand here the Command for the five daily canonical prayers, viz.: the four from the declination of the sun from the zenith to the fullest darkness of the night, and the early morning prayer, Fajr, which is usually accompanied by a reading of the holy Qur'ān. The four afternoon prayers are: Zuhr, immediately after the sun begins to decline in the afternoon; 'Asr, in the late afternoon; Magrib, immediately after sunset; and 'Ishā, after the glow of sunset has disappeared and the full darkness of the night has set in. There is difference of opinion as to the meaning of particular words and phrases, but none as to the general effect of the passage.

Till the darkness of the night,  
And the morning prayer  
And reading: for the prayer  
And reading in the morning  
Carry their testimony.<sup>2276</sup>

إِلَى غَسَقِ اللَّيْلِ وَقُرْآنِ الْفَجْرِ  
إِنَّ قُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ كَانَ مَشْهُودًا ۝

79. And pray in the small watches<sup>2277</sup>  
Of the morning: therein  
Is much (spiritual) profit  
To thee—and the hope  
That thy Lord will send thee  
To the Place of Praise and  
Glory!<sup>2278</sup>

وَمِنَ اللَّيْلِ فَسَبِّحْهُ  
نَافِلَةً لَّكَ  
عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَبْعَثَكَ رَبُّكَ مَقَامًا  
مَّحْمُودًا ۝

80. Say: "O my Lord!  
Let my entry be<sup>2279</sup>  
By the Gate of Truth  
And Honour, and likewise  
My exit by the Gate  
Of Truth and Honour;  
And grant me  
From Thy Presence  
An authority to aid (me)."<sup>2280</sup>

وَقُلْ رَبِّ ادْخُلْنِي  
مُدْخَلَ صِدْقٍ  
وَأَخْرِجْنِي مَخْرَجَ صِدْقٍ  
وَاجْعَلْ لِي مِنْ لَدُنْكَ سُلْطَانًا  
بَصِيرًا ۝

2276. The morning prayer is specially singled out for separate mention, because the morning is a "holy hour" and special spiritual influences act on the soul awaking from the night's rest. Special testimony is borne to the prayers of this hour by the angelic host.

2277. This is held to be addressed specially to the holy Prophet who usually prayed more than the five canonical prayers. The *Tahajjud* was a prayer after midnight, in the small watches of the morning.

2278. To the Prophet was to be assigned in the Hereafter the highest Post of Honour and Glory—the *Maqām Maḥmūd*. There is much mystic meaning in this, implying his excellence above all other Prophets.

2279. The entry and exit here referred to may be interpreted in four senses: (1) entry into death and exit at the resurrection: for the righteous, who have purified their souls by prayer (last verse) and spiritual teaching from the Qur-ān (next verse), there is on each occasion a fuller and fuller realisation and enjoyment of truth and honour: for those who are estranged from God, the effect is the opposite: the truth becomes bitter and there is ignominy and exposure instead of honour: (2) entry for the holy Prophet into the new life at Medina, which was still in the womb of futurity, and exit from the life of persecution and the milieu of falsehood, which surrounded him in his native city of Mecca still given up to idolatry: (3) referring to the impending Hijrat again, the prayer may mean, "Let it be from pure motives of truth and spiritual honour, and not from motives of anger against the city of Mecca or its persecutors, or of ambition or worldly power from the city of Medina, which was ready to lay everything at the Apostle's feet": (4) generally, entry and exit at every stage of life.

2280. All prayer must be for God's aid and authority. However much we may plan, our success must depend on His aid. However noble our motives, we have no right to imperil any lives unless there is authority in the Word of God. The Apostle only acts on God's commission and inspiration.

81. And say: "Truth has (now)  
Arrived, and Falsehood perished:  
For Falsehood is (by its nature)  
Bound to perish."<sup>2281</sup>

وَقُلْ حَقَّ الْحَقُّ وَبَاطِلُ الْبَاطِلِ  
لَئِنْ الْبَاطِلُ كَانَ زَهُوقًا ٥

82. We send down (stage by stage)  
In the Qur-ān that which  
Is a healing and a mercy  
To those who believe:  
To the unjust it causes  
Nothing but loss after loss.<sup>2282</sup>

وَنُنَزِّلُ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ  
مَا هُوَ شِفَاءٌ وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ  
وَلَا يَزِيدُ الظَّالِمِينَ إِلَّا خَسَارًا ٥

83. Yet, when We bestow  
Our favours on man,  
He turns away and becomes  
Remote on his side (instead  
Of coming to Us), and when  
Evil seizes him he  
Gives himself up to despair!<sup>2283</sup>

وَإِذَا أَنْعَمْنَا عَلَى الْإِنْسَانِ  
أَعْرَضَ وَكَانَ بِجَانِبِهِ  
وَإِذَا امْتَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ كَانَ يُوسِرًا ٥

84. Say: "Everyone acts  
According to his own disposition:  
But your Lord knows best  
Who it is that is  
Best-guided on the Way."<sup>2284</sup>

وَقُلْ كُلٌّ يَعْمَلُ عَلَى شَاكِلَتِهِ  
فَرَبُّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ مَنْ هُوَ أَهْدَى سَبِيلًا ٥

### C. 132.—Who can define the Spirit of Inspiration?

- (xvii. 85-111.) Its gift is the highest of God's Mercies  
To man. The Qur-ān is divine, and no carplings  
Can affect its greatness or the greatness  
Of the Messenger who brought it to men.  
Those who reject it will be called  
To account on the Day of Judgment. Let not  
Pride and Ignorance rush, like Pharaoh,  
To the Punishment of the Hereafter.  
The Qur-ān as revealed by stages teaches  
The Truth: learn it and chant it, and praise  
The Beautiful Names of God for ever!

2281. From its nature falsehood must perish, for it is the opposite of Truth, and Truth must ever prevail.

2282. In God's revelation there is healing for our broken spirits, hope for our spiritual future, and joy in the forgiveness of our sins. All who work in faith will share in these privileges. It is only the rebels against God's Law who will suffer loss. The more they will oppose Truth, the deeper down will they go into the mire—the state of sin and Wrath, which is worse than destruction.

2283. Truth saves us from two extremes; when we are happy, we are saved from being puffed up, for we realise that everything comes from God; and when we suffer misfortunes, we are not in despair, for we know that God is our sure refuge and help.

2284. If the wicked go their own ways, there is nothing to discourage us. It is their way. We must seek and hold fast to true guidance.

## SECTION 10.

85. They ask thee concerning  
The Spirit (of inspiration).<sup>2285</sup>  
Say: "The Spirit (cometh)  
By command of my Lord:  
Of knowledge it is only  
A little that is communicated  
To you."

٨٥- وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الرُّوحِ  
قُلِ الرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّي  
وَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ۝

86. If it were Our Will,  
We could take away  
That which We have  
Sent thee by inspiration: <sup>2286</sup>  
Then wouldst thou find  
None to plead thy affair  
In that matter as against Us,—

٨٦- وَلَئِنْ شِئْنَا لَنَذْهَبَ بِالذِّكْرِ  
أَوْ كُنَّا إِلَيْكَ  
نُفْعًا لَا تَسْأَلُكَ بِهِ عَالِمِينَ وَكَيْلًا ۝

87. Except for Mercy from thy  
Lord: <sup>2287</sup>  
For His Bounty is  
To thee (indeed) great.

٨٧- إِلَّا رَحْمَةً مِنْ رَبِّكَ  
إِنَّ فَضْلَهُ كَانَ عَلَيْكَ كَبِيرًا ۝

88. Say: "If the whole  
Of mankind and Jinns <sup>2288</sup>  
Were to gather together  
To produce the like  
Of this Qur-ān, they  
Could not produce  
The like thereof, even if  
They backed up each other

٨٨- قُلْ لَئِنْ أَجْمَعَتِ الْإِنْسُ وَالْجِنُّ  
عَلَى أَنْ يَأْتُوا بِمِثْلِ  
هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ لَا يَأْتُونَ بِمِثْلِهِ  
وَلَوْ كَانَتْ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ

2285. What is the nature of inspiration? Who brings it? Can it ask its Bringer questions? Can we ask anything which we wish? These are the sort of questions always asked when inspiration is called in question. The answer is given here. Inspiration is one of those high spiritual mysteries which cannot be explained in the terms of our every-day human experience. It is spiritual. The Spirit (Gabriel) does not come of his own will. He comes by the command of God, and reveals what God commands him to reveal. Of the sum-total of true spiritual knowledge what a small part it is that ordinary mortals can understand! They can be only given that which they can understand, however dimly. We are not in a position to ask anything that we wish. If we did so, it would only make us look foolish, for the guidance comes from God's Wisdom, not from our worldly knowledge.

2286. Even the spiritual knowledge that comes to us comes because of the favour and mercy of God. If He were to withhold it, who can call Him in question?

2287. In that case the only one who can plead for us is the Mercy of God. We can interpret the phrase in its widest abstract sense, as well as in the concrete sense of the title which is applied to the holy Prophet Muhammad, the Mercy of God. Thus we come from the abstract question to the concrete question of the Qur-ān, which is referred to by name in the verses that follow.

2288. For the meaning of "Jinns", see n. 929 to vi. 100.



With help and support.<sup>2289</sup>

89. And We have explained  
To man, in this Qur-ān,  
Every kind of similitude:<sup>2290</sup>  
Yet the greater part of men  
Refuse (to receive it)  
Except with ingratitude!<sup>2291</sup>

90. They say: "We shall not  
Believe in thee, until thou  
Cause a spring to gush  
Forth for us from the earth,"<sup>2292</sup>

91. "Or (until) thou have  
A garden of date trees  
And vines, and cause rivers  
To gush forth in their midst,  
Carrying abundant water,"<sup>2293</sup>

92. "Or thou cause the sky  
To fall in pieces, as thou  
Sayest (will happen), against  
us;"<sup>2294</sup>

ظَهَرَ ۝

۞-۹۰ وَقَدْ صَرَّفْنَا لِلنَّاسِ فِي هَذَا  
الْقُرْآنِ مِنْ كُلِّ مَثَلٍ فَأَبَى أَكْثَرُ  
النَّاسِ إِلَّا كُفُورًا ۝

۹۰- وَقَالُوا لَنْ نُؤْمِنَ بِكَ حَتَّى  
تُفْرِكَنَا مِنَ الْأَرْضِ يَنْبُوعًا ۝

۹۱- أَوْ تَكُونَ لَكَ جَنَّةٌ مِنْ نَخِيلٍ  
وَعِنَبٍ تُفَجِّرُ الْأَنْهَارَ خِلَالَهَا الْفُجَارَ ۝

۹۲- أَوْ تَنْقُطَ السَّمَاءُ  
كَمَا رَعِمَتْ عَلَيْكَ رُسُفًا ۝

2289. The proof of the Qur-ān is in its own beauty and nature, and the circumstances in which it was promulgated. The world is challenged to produce a Book like it and has not produced one. It is the only revealed Book whose text stands pure and uncorrupted to-day. Cf., for a similar challenge, ii. 23, x. 38, and xi. 13.

2290. In the Qur-ān everything is explained in detail from various points of view, by commands, similitudes, examples, stories, parables, etc. It does not merely narrate stories or lay down vague abstract propositions. It gives every detailed help in outward and inner life.

2291. One form in which it can be received with ingratitude is to pay verbal tributes to it but not study it as it ought to be studied (ii. 121, *haqqa tilawatihī*), or to disobey its precepts or standards.

2292. Cf. ii. 60.

2293. This ill-assorted and crude jumble of the sort of miracles which the Unbelievers wanted is in very appropriate contrast to the sober and reasoned argument which is begun in the last sentence of verse 93 and continued in sections 11 and 12, which close this Sūra. It is throughout reminiscent of the materialistic imagination of Jewish sceptics, which was mainly responsible for the fall of the Jewish nation (see verse 101 below). For a thirsty people sojourning in a dry land the finding of a spring of water as in the story of Moses or of the well of Zamzam is an appropriate miracle. But miracles are not for faithless crowds to gape at. A beautiful well-watered Garden is a symbol of Felicity; but a sceptic cannot order God to produce it for his pleasure. The same may be said about a house adorned with gold, except that its symbolism is even more materialistic. The fall of the sky or producing God face to face or climbing to the skies by a ladder, or bringing down a book of parchment which men could handle, are all irreverent suggestions that make no distinction between spiritual and material things.

2294. Contrast the sublime passages like that beginning with lxxxii. 1, or that in xxv. 25 where the final breaking up of the firmaments as we know them is referred to in the world's catastrophe, with the ridiculous demand that it should be done for the sport of the sceptics!

Or thou bring God  
And the angels before (us)  
Face to face;<sup>2295</sup>

أَوْتَاتِي بِاللهِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ قَبِيلًا ۝

93. "Or thou have a house  
Adorned with gold,  
Or thou mount a ladder  
Right into the skies;<sup>2296</sup>  
No, we shall not even believe  
In thy mounting until thou  
Send down to us a book  
That we could read."<sup>2297</sup>  
Say: "Glory to my Lord!  
Am I aught but a man,—  
An apostle?"<sup>2298</sup>

۹۳- أَوْ يَكُونُ لَكَ يَدٌ مِّنْ رُّحْرٍ  
أَوْ تَرَفِّي فِي السَّمَاءِ  
وَلَنْ نُؤْمِنَ بِرُفْقِكَ حَتَّى  
تُنَزِّلَ عَلَيْنَا كِتَابًا نَقْرُوهُ  
قُلْ سُبْحَانَ رَبِّي  
هَلْ كُنْتُ إِلَّا بَشَرًا مِّثْلَ سُوْرَا ۝

#### SECTION 11.

94. ~~What~~ hat kept men back  
From Belief when Guidance  
Came to them, was nothing  
But this: they said,  
"Has God sent a man?"<sup>2299</sup>  
(Like us) to be (His) Apostle?"

۹۴- وَمَا مَنَعَهُ النَّاسَ أَنْ يُؤْمِنُوا إِذْ جَاءَهُمْ  
الْهُدَىٰ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا  
أَبْعَثَ اللهُ بَشَرًا مِّثْلَ سُوْرَا ۝

95. Say, "If there were settled,  
On earth, angels walking about"<sup>2300</sup>

۹۵- قُلْ لَوْ كَانَ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَلَائِكَةٌ

2295. Cf. ii. 55 and iv. 153 about the desire of the Israelites to see God face to face; and vi. 8-9, about angels coming down to convince men.

2296. Cf. vi. 35 about a ladder to the skies.

2297. Cf. vi. 7 for the foolish idea of materialistic sceptics that a spiritual revelation could come down from the heavens on a piece of parchment that they can touch.

2298. An apostle of God is a man at the command of God, and not to satisfy the disingenuous whims and fancies of Unbelievers. Miracles greater than any that their foolish fancies could devise were before them. The Qur-ān was such a miracle, and it is a standing miracle that lasts through the ages. Why did they not believe? The real reason was spite and jealousy like that of Iblis. See next verse.

2299. When a man is raised to honour and dignity, his sincere brothers rejoice, for it is an honour that reflects its glory on them. But those with evil in their hearts are jealous like their prototype Iblis, (xvii. 61, n. 2251). To such men the mere fact that their own brother receives the grace of God is enough to turn them against that brother. Any other reasons they may devise are mere make-believe.

2300. The argument is that if angels inhabited this earth, an angel from heaven could be sent down as an apostle to them, as they could mutually understand each other, and the Message of God could be explained without difficulty. But the earth is inhabited by men, and the men themselves are divided into races, or groups, or nations. To each Group is sent an apostle from among their brethren: to 'Ad, their brother Hūd (xi. 50); to Thamūd, their brother Ṣāliḥ (xi. 61); and so on. As a matter of fact, with wicked men, constituted as they are, the appearance of an angel causes disturbance and an unseemly riot, as in the case of the angels that came to Lot (xi. 77-80). In any case they cannot carry out an effective mission among men (vi. 8-9).

In peace and quiet, We should  
Certainly have sent them  
Down from the heavens  
An angel for an apostle."

96. Say: "Enough is God  
For a witness between me<sup>2301</sup>  
And you: for He is  
Well acquainted with His servants,  
And He sees (all things).

97. ~~It~~ is he whom God guides,  
That is on true guidance;  
But he whom He leaves  
Astray—for such wilt thou  
Find no protector besides Him.<sup>2302</sup>  
On the Day of Judgment  
We shall gather them together,  
Prone on their faces,  
Blind, dumb, and deaf:  
Their abode will be Hell:  
Every time it shows abatement,  
We shall increase for them  
The fierceness of the Fire.<sup>2303</sup>

98. That is their recompense,  
Because they rejected Our Signs,  
And said, "When we are reduced  
To bones and broken dust,  
Should we really be raised up  
(To be) a new Creation?"<sup>2304</sup>

يَسْأَلُونَ مُطِيعَتَيْنِ لَنُزَلِّنَا عَلَيْهِم  
مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ مَلَكًا رَسُولًا ۝

٩٦. قُلْ كَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ  
إِنَّهُ كَانَ بِعِبَادِهِ خَبِيرًا بَصِيرًا ۝

٩٧. وَمَن يَهْدِ اللَّهُ فَبُهِدَ لَهُ  
وَمَن يَضِلَّ فَلَن يُضِلَّهُ ۚ فَلَئِن تَجِدَ لَهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءَ  
مِن دُونِهِ

وَنُخْشِرُهُم يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ عَلَىٰ وُجُوهِهِمْ  
عُمِيًّا ۚ وَبَلَمَّا وَصَّمْنَا  
مَأْوَاهُمْ جَهَنَّمَ  
كَلِمًا خَبِثَتْ زُرْدَاهُمْ سَعِيرًا ۝

٩٨. وَذَٰلِكَ جَزَاءُ وَّهُم بِآيَاتِهِمْ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِنَا  
وَقَالُوا إِذَا كُنَّا عِظًا وَرُفَاتًا  
إِنَّا لَمَبْعُوثُونَ خَلْقًا جَدِيدًا ۝

2301. 'If you want a real witness, it is not these sorts of fancy miracles, but the witness of the true ever-living God, God is always everywhere—and with you. Purify your hearts, and ask Him in true contrition and repentance, and He will guide you and show you the Way.'

2302. 'All your insincere subtleties are of no use. The only real guidance is the guidance of God. If you do not seek His grace, you will be lost. Besides Him, there is no true friend, or protector.'

2303. 'If you still persist in your evil ways, what is to be your evil end? You will become more and more identified with the Company of Evil. You will come to shame and ignominy, like men thrown down prone on their faces. You will lose the use of all the faculties of judgment with which God has endowed you. Instead of seeing, you will be blind to God's Signs. Instead of having the power of seeking Him in prayer and rejoicing in His grace, you will be dumb. Instead of hearing the harmony and music of the spheres, as typified in the pure and harmonious lives of men, you will hear nothing or only hear dull or confused sounds like deaf men. The scorching fire of your punishment will not grow less, but grow more fierce as you go deeper into Hell.'

2304. This phrase is repeated from xvii. 49. The reminiscence rounds off the argument. After certain moral precepts to which Faith was linked, we have had a discussion of Unfaith. Its various motives have been analysed, and its penalties have been allegorically shadowed forth. After this, the example of Pharaoh is held as a type of Unfaith in the next section, and the Sūra closed with an exhortation to faith and a declaration of the glory of God.

99. See they not that God,  
Who created the heavens  
And the earth, has power  
To create the like of them<sup>2305</sup>  
(Anew)? Only He has  
Decreed a term appointed,  
Of which there is no doubt.  
But the unjust refuse  
(To receive it) except  
With ingratitude.<sup>2306</sup>

۹۹- أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّ اللَّهَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ  
وَالْأَرْضَ قَادِرٌ عَلَى أَنْ يَخْلُقَ مِثْلَهُمْ  
وَجَعَلَ لَهُمْ أَجَلًا  
لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ  
فَأَنَّى الظَّالِمُونَ إِلَّا كُفُورًا ۝

100. Say: "If ye had  
Control of the Treasures  
Of the Mercy of my Lord,  
Behold, ye would keep them  
Back, for fear of spending  
Them: for man  
Is (ever) niggardly!"<sup>2307</sup>

۱۰۰- قُلْ لَوْ أَنَّكُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ خَزَائِنَ  
رَحْمَةِ رَبِّي  
إِذْ لَا مَسْكَتُمْ خَشْيَةَ الْإِنْفَاقِ  
وَكَانَ الْإِنْسَانُ قَنُورًا ۝

#### SECTION 12.

101. ~~Now~~ To Moses We did give  
Nine Clear Signs:<sup>2308</sup>  
Ask the Children of Israel:  
When he came to them,<sup>2309</sup>  
Pharaoh said to him:  
"O Moses! I consider thee,

۱۰۱- وَ لَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى تِسْعَ آيَاتٍ  
بَيِّنَاتٍ فَمَنكُم بِرَبِّهِ إِسْرَءِيلَ إِذْ جَاءَهُمْ  
فَقَالَ لَهُ فِرْعَوْنُ

2305. God, Who created all that is in the heavens and on earth, has surely the power to revive the life of individual souls after their bodies have perished,—and revive them with memories of their past life and for a continuation of their spiritual history. Only He has fixed a term for each stage of our existence, which we can neither prolong nor shorten.

2306. This phrase carries us back to xvii. 89, after we began the argument about the real motives for the rejection of the Qur-ān by sceptics. That argument is now closed in a sort of minor circle within the major circle sketched in n. 2304 above.

2307. A fresh argument is now addressed to those who would confine God's revelations to a limited circle of men, such as they themselves belonged to. The immediate reference was to the Jews, who could not understand how any Gentiles could receive revelations and guidance even superior to what they considered their own birth-right. But the tendency is widespread in the human race. A particular race, or caste, or a particular kind of culture, claims to be the custodian of God's Message, whereas it is universal. God's Mercy is universal, and He scatters the priceless Treasures of His Mercy broadcast among His creatures. They are not exhausted by spending. It is only the misers who hoard their wealth for fear it should be used up by spending. 'Are you spiritual misers going to keep back God's holy Message from the multitude? Is that the reason why you deny the advent of the new Teacher, who comes as a Mercy to all men—to all Creation?'

2308. *Nine Clear Signs*: see vii. 133, n. 1091. The story of Pharaoh (or a phase of it) is here told with a view to exhibiting the decline of a soul on account of pride in outward power and dignity.

2309. *To them*: i. e. to Pharaoh, as sitting in his Council, with the Chiefs of his People. Cf. vii. 103. The whole scene is described in some detail from the point of view of nations or Ummats in vii. 103-133.

Indeed, to have been  
Worked upon by sorcery !” <sup>2310</sup>

102. Moses said, “Thou knowest  
Well that these things  
Have been sent down by none  
But the Lord of the heavens  
And the earth as eye-opening <sup>2311</sup>  
Evidence: and I consider thee,  
Indeed, O Pharaoh, to be  
One doomed to destruction !”

103. So he resolved to remove <sup>2312</sup>  
them  
From the face of the earth:  
But We did drown him  
And all who were with him.

104. And We said thereafter  
To the Children of Israel,  
“Dwell securely in the land <sup>2313</sup>  
(Of promise)”: but when  
The second of the warnings came  
To pass, We gathered you  
Together in a mingled crowd. <sup>2314</sup>

إِنِّي لَأَظُنُّكَ يُمُوسَىٰ مَسْحُورًا ۝

١٠٢- قَالَ لَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمَا أَنزَلَ  
هَؤُلَاءِ إِلَّا رَبَّ السَّمٰوٰتِ  
وَالْأَرْضِ بَصَآئِرٌ ۚ

وَأِنِّي لَأَظُنُّكَ يُفْرَعُونَ مَثْبُورًا ۝

١٠٣- فَأَرَادَ أَن يَسْتَفِزَّهُم مِّنَ الْأَرْضِ  
فَأَغْرَقْنَاهُ وَمَنْ مَّعَهُ جَمِيعًا ۝

١٠٤- وَوَعَدْنَا مَن بَعْدَهُ بِنُحْيٰى إِسْرَآءِيلَ  
اسْكُنُوا الْأَرْضَ فَإِذَا جَاءَ وَعْدُ الْآخِرَةِ  
جَعَلْنَا بَيْنَكُمُ الْفُرُجَ ۝

2310. At a different and later stage in the scene, Pharaoh's Chiefs call Moses a "sorcerer well-versed" (vii. 109). Here Moses, who had come with the Nine-Signs but had not yet shown them, is reproached with being the object of sorcery: he is practically told that he is mad!

2311. We can well suppose Moses to ask Pharaoh to recall all the past history of Moses, for Moses had been brought up in Pharaoh's palace in all the learning of the Egyptians. He could not therefore be mad, or a simpleton worked on by Egyptian magic. What he was going to show was something far greater: it was not the deceptive magic of Pharaoh's sorcerers, but true Signs that came from the God of all power. They were to open the eyes of his people, and if Pharaoh resisted faith, Moses warns him that Pharaoh in that case was doomed to destruction. This is the course of the soul that sinks down by Pride!

2312. Pharaoh on this tries various subterfuges and plans for removing not only Moses but all his people by doing away with them. The detailed story is not told here but may be read in S. vii. But God's Wrath descended on Pharaoh and those who were with him in body and mind. The Egyptians who repented were subject to Pharaoh's wrath but were saved from the Wrath of God (vii. 121-126).

2313. The Israelites were taken to the Promised Land in Palestine, and they established their own kingdom there, but they forfeited God's favour by their sins and backslidings and will have to answer like all souls by the law of personal responsibility at the Day of Judgment.

2314. The *second of the warnings*: the first was probably that mentioned above, in xvii. 5, and the second that mentioned in xvii. 7 (middle). When this second warning due to the rejection of Jesus came to pass, the Jews were gathered together in a mingled crowd, and they have never had a Jewish nationality since. Some Commentators understand the second warning to be the Day of Judgment, the Promise of the Hereafter.

105. We sent down the (Qur-ān)  
In Truth, and in Truth<sup>2315</sup>  
Has it descended: and We sent  
Thee but to give Glad  
Tidings and to warn (sinners).<sup>2316</sup>

وَبِالْحَقِّ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ وَبِالْحَقِّ نَزَلَ  
وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا مُبَشِّرًا وَنَذِيرًا ۝

106. (It is) a Qur-ān  
Which We have divided  
(Into parts from time to time),  
In order that thou mightest  
Recite it to men  
At intervals: We have  
Revealed it by stages.<sup>2317</sup>

وَأَنزَلْنَاهُ فَرَقْنَاهُ لِتَقْرَأَهُ عَلَى النَّاسِ  
عَلَىٰ مَكْنًى  
وَأَنزَلْنَاهُ تَنزِيلًا ۝

107. Say: "Whether ye believe  
In it or not, it is true  
That those who were given<sup>2318</sup>  
Knowledge beforehand, when  
It is recited to them,  
Fall down on their faces  
In humble prostration,

۝ قُلْ أَمَّا يُؤْمِرُكُمْ أَوْ لَا تُوَفِّقُوا  
إِنَّ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ إِذَا  
يُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ  
يَخْرُجُونَ لِلْذِّكْرِ فَانْسُجِدُوا ۝

108. And say: "Glory  
To our Lord! Truly  
Has the promise of our Lord  
Been fulfilled!"<sup>2319</sup>

۝ وَيَقُولُونَ سُبْحَنَ رَبِّنَا إِن  
كَانَ وَعْدُ رَبِّنَا لَمَفْعُولًا ۝

2315. The Qur-ān was sent down by God in Truth: it was not forged by any mortal. It has descended in Truth: it was not and has not been falsified or corrupted in the process of being communicated to mankind.

2316. The part of the Prophet was that of a Messenger: he was not responsible if the ungodly rejected it. He fulfilled his mission in promulgating and explaining it and leaving it as a legacy to the world.

2317. The marvel is that these parts, revealed at different times and in different circumstances, should fit together so closely and consistently as they do. All revelation is progressive. The previous revelations were also progressive. Each of them marked a stage in the world's spiritual history. Man's mind does not take in more than his spiritual state will have prepared him for. God's revelation comes as a light to illuminate our difficulties and show us the way in actual situations that arise.

2318. No one's belief or unbelief affects the beauty or grandeur of God's revelation. But those endowed with spiritual knowledge or insight know at once when they hear God's holy Word, and fall down and adore God. Those endowed with knowledge include those who had received previous revelations and had kept themselves free from corrupt ideas.

2319. Those who had received previous revelations find in the Qur-ān and in the Apostle who brought it, the promise of God fulfilled. Those who were spiritually prepared for it found in the same way the satisfaction of their spiritual yearnings: to them, also, God's promise was seen to be fulfilled.

109. They fall down on their faces  
In tears, and it increases  
Their (earnest) humility.<sup>2320</sup>

110. Say: "Call upon God, or  
Call upon *Rahmān*:<sup>2321</sup>  
By whatever name ye call  
Upon Him, (it is well):  
For to Him belong  
The Most Beautiful Names.<sup>2322</sup>  
Neither speak thy Prayer aloud,  
Nor speak it in a low tone,<sup>2323</sup>  
But seek a middle course  
Between."

111. Say: "Praise be to God,  
Who begets no son,  
And has no partner  
In (His) dominion:  
Nor (needs) He any  
To protect Him from  
humiliation:<sup>2324</sup>  
Yea, magnify Him  
For His greatness and glory!"

وَيَسْجُدُونَ لِلَّهِ قَانٍ يَكُونُونَ وَيَرْجِعُونَ  
خُشُوعًا ۝

۝ قُلْ اَدْعُوا اللَّهَ اَوْ اَدْعُوا الرَّحْمٰنَ  
اَيًّا مَّا تَدْعُوا  
فَلَهُ الْاَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنٰى  
وَلَا تَجْعَلْنَ صِلَاتِكَ وَلَا تُخَافُ بِهَا  
وَابْتَغِ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ سَبِيلًا ۝

۝ وَقُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي لَمْ يَتَّخِذْ  
وَلَدًا اَوْ لَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ شَرِيْكٌ فِي الْمُلْكِ  
وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ وَلِيٌّ مِنَ الذَّلٰلِ  
وَكَبِّرْهُ تَكْبِيرًا ۝

2320. A feeling of earnest humility comes to the man who realises how, in spite of his own unworthiness, he is brought, by God's Mercy, into touch with the most sublime Truths. Such a man is touched with the deepest emotion, which finds its outlet in tears.

2321. Cf. vii. 180. *Rahmān* describes one of the attributes of God,—His Grace and Mercy which come to the sinner even before he feels conscious of the need of it,—the preventive Grace which saves God's servants from sin. See n. 19 to i. 1. God can be invoked, either by His simple name, which includes all attributes, or in the highest Sufi philosophy, rises above all attributes, or by one of the names implying the attributes by which we try to explain His nature to our limited understanding. The attribute of Mercy in *Rahmān* was particularly repugnant to the Pagan Arabs (see xxv. 60, and xxi. 36): that is why special stress is laid on it in the Qur'an.

2322. These Beautiful Names of God are many. For *tasbeḥ* purposes a list of 99 is made out in *Ḥadīth* literature: that in Tirmizī is considered authoritative. *Qaḍhī* Muḥammad Sulaimān has published an Urdu monograph on the subject, published by the Daftaṛ Raḥmatun-lil-'Alamīn, Patiala, 1930. Those who wish to see a poetic Commentary on the names in the form of stories in English may consult Sir Edwin Arnold's *Pearls of the Faith*. Sir Edwin's stories are of unequal merit, but a fine example is furnished by No. 4, *al-Malik*, "The King".

2323. Cf. vii. 205. All prayer should be pronounced with earnestness and humility, whether it is congregational prayer or the private outpouring of one's own soul. Such an attitude is not consistent with an over-loud pronunciation of the words, though in public prayers the standard of permissible loudness is naturally higher than in the case of private prayer. In public prayers, of course, the *aẓān* or call to prayer will be in a loud voice to be heard near and far, but the chants from the Sacred Book should be neither so loud as to attract the hostile notice of those who do not believe nor so low in tone as not to be heard by the whole congregation.

2324. A first step towards the understanding of God's nature is to clear our mind from superstitions, such as that God begot a son, or that He has partners, or that He is dependent upon other beings to protect Him from harm and humiliation. We must realise that He is the One and Only Reality: His greatness and glory are above anything we can conceive: but using our highest spiritual ideas, we must declare forth His greatness and glory.

The *Sūrah* began with singing the glory and praises of God: it ends on the same note, concluding the argument. The next *Sūrah* takes up the same theme from another point of view, and opens with the same note, "Praise be to God".

INTRODUCTION TO SŪRA XVIII (*Kahf*).

It has been explained in the Introduction to S. xvii how the five Sūras xvii to xxi develop the theme of the individual soul's spiritual history, and how they fit into the general scheme of exposition.

This particular Meccan Sūra may be called a lesson on the brevity and mystery of Life. First there is the story of the Companions of the Cave who slept therein for a long period, and yet thought they had been there only a day or less. Then there is the story of the mysterious Teacher who shows Moses how Life itself is a parable. And further there is the story of *Zul-qarnain*, the two-horned one, the powerful ruler of west and east, who made an iron wall to protect the weak against the strong. The parables refer to the brevity, uncertainty, and vanity of this life; to the many paradoxes in it, which can only be understood by patience and the fullness of knowledge; and to the need of guarding our spiritual gains against the incursions of evil.

*Summary.*

The Qur-ān is a direction and a warning. This life is brief and subject to vicissitudes. Our ideas of Time are defective, as shown in the story of the Companions of the Cave, who had faith, truth, patience, and other virtues. But their life was a mystery that can be fathomed but by few (xviii. 1-22, and C. 133).

Knowledge is for God: be on your guard against idle conjectures and cock-sure hopes. Learn from the Qur-ān. Parable of the man who is puffed up with this world's goods and is brought to nought (xviii. 23-44, and C. 134).

This life is uncertain and variable: goodness and virtue are better and more durable. For the Day of Reckoning will come, with its Mercy and its Wrath (xviii. 45-59, and C. 135).

Moses in his thirst for knowledge forgot his limitations. Patience and faith were enjoined on him, and he understood when the paradoxes of Life were explained (xviii. 60-82, and C. 136).

*Zul-qarnain* had a wide dominion: he punished the guilty and rewarded the good: he protected the weak from the lawless: but he had faith, and valued the guidance of God. God is One, and His service is righteousness (xviii. 83-110, and C. 137).

- C. 133.—The Book of Revelation gives straight  
(xviii. 1-22.) Directions to make our lives straight,—  
To warn us against Evil and guide us  
To the Good everlasting. Teach the Truth  
But fret not about men rejecting it.  
The Parable of the Companions of the Cave  
Shows how God works wonders beyond  
Our fathoming: how Faith is a sure  
Refuge in ways we know not; how  
Time itself works God's Plan  
Before we know how it passes;  
How He can give us rest, and raise  
Us back to life against all odds;  
And how futile it is to engage  
In controversies about matters we know not.



## Sūra XVIII.

*Kahf*, or the Cave.*In the name of God, Most Gracious,  
Most Merciful.*

1. Praise be to God,<sup>2325</sup>  
Who hath sent to His Servant  
The Book, and hath allowed  
Therein no Crookedness: <sup>2326</sup>
2. (He hath made it) Straight<sup>2327</sup>  
(And Clear) in order that  
He may warn (the godless)  
Of a terrible Punishment  
From Him, and that He  
May give Glad Tidings  
To the Believers who work  
Righteous deeds, that they  
Shall have a goodly Reward,
3. Wherein they shall  
Remain for ever: <sup>2328</sup>
4. Further, that He may warn  
Those (also) who say,



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ  
 الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَى عَبْدِهِ  
 الْكِتَابَ وَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ عِوَجًا ۝

۝ قَيِّمًا لِّلْمِيزَانِ  
 بِأَسَاسٍ شَدِيدٍ لِّأَتْرَنِ لِّدُنِّهِ  
 وَيُنَبِّئُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ الَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ  
 الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ أَجْرًا حَسَنًا ۝

۝ مَا أَكْثَرُ الَّذِينَ فِيهِ أَكْدَا ۝

۝ وَيُنذِرَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا

2325. See n. 2324 to xvii. 111. The theme of the last Sūra, that God is good and worthy of all praise from His creatures, to whom He has granted a clear revelation, is continued in this Sūra. The spirit of man makes gradual progress upwards, through the grace and mercy of God.

2326. Some people's idea of a Sacred Book is that it should be full of mysteries—dark corners, ambiguous expressions, words so far removed from human speech that they cover anything or nothing. Pagan oracles were couched in language which suggested one meaning to the hearer and claimed to have the very opposite meaning in the light of events which actually happened subsequently. They were distinctly crooked, not straight. In the next verse the word "Straight" (*qaiyim*) is used to characterize the Qur-ān, in contrast to this word "crooked" (*'iwaj*). See also xix, 36, n. 2488.

2327. *Qaiyim*: straight, that which has no bends and no corners to mystify people, that which speaks clearly and unambiguously, that which guides to the right path. Cf. ix. 36, where the adjective is used for a straight usage, in contrast to usages which tend to mystify and deceive people. The Qur-ān is above all things straight, clear, and perspicuous. Its directions are plain for everyone to understand. Any book that deals with the highest mysteries of spiritual life must necessarily have portions whose full meaning is clearer to some minds than to others not so well prepared. But here there is nowhere any mystification, any desire to wrap up things in dark sayings repugnant to human reason. God's purpose is to give clear warning of spiritual dangers and lead up to the highest bliss.

2328. The "Reward" is not a material thing, or limited by time or space. It is a state of bliss. Cf. Milton's "The mind is its own place, and in itself can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven" (P. L. i, 254-55).

"God hath begotten a son": <sup>2329</sup>

5. No knowledge have they  
Of such a thing, nor  
Had their fathers. It is  
A grievous thing that issues  
From their mouths as a saying. <sup>2330</sup>  
What they say is nothing  
But falsehood!
6. Thou wouldst only, perchance,  
Fret thyself to death,  
Following after them, in grief, <sup>2331</sup>  
If they believe not  
In this Message.
7. That which is on earth  
We have made but as  
A glittering show for the earth, <sup>2332</sup>  
In order that We may test  
Them—as to which of them  
Are best in conduct.
8. Verily what is on earth  
We shall make but as

اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ وَلَدًا ۝

٥- مَا لَهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ وَلَا إِلَهٌ بَابَهُمْ  
كَثُرَتْ كَلِمَةُ تَخْرُجُ مِنْ أَفْوَاهِهِمْ  
إِنْ يَقُولُونَ إِلَّا كَذِبًا ۝

٦- فَلَعَلَّكَ بَاخِعٌ نَفْسَكَ عَلَى آثَارِهِمْ  
إِنْ تَحْمِلُ يُؤْمِنُوا بِهَذَا الْحَدِيثِ أَسَفًا ۝

٧- إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا مَا عَلَى الْأَرْضِ  
زِينَةً لَهَا لِنَبْلُوهُمْ  
أَيُّهُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا ۝

٨- وَإِنَّا لَجَاعِلُونَ مَا عَلَيْهَا

2329. The warning is not only needed for those who deny God or deny His Message, but also for those whose false ideas of God degrade religion in supposing that God begot a son, for God is One and is High above any ideas of physical reproduction.

2330. The attribution of a son "begotten" to God has no basis in fact or in reason. It is only a "word" or "saying" that issues out of their mouths. It is not even a dogma that is reasoned out or can be explained in any way that is consistent with the spiritual nature of God.

2331. In a reasonable world the preaching of a reasonable Faith like that of Islam would win universal acceptance. But the world is not altogether reasonable. It caused great distress to the unselfish Preacher of Islam that his Message met with so much opposition. He wanted to point the way to salvation. He only got, in the Meccan period, abuse from the chiefs of the Meccans—abuse and persecution, not only for himself but for the Truth which he was preaching. A heart less stout than his might have been appalled at what seemed the hopeless task of reclaiming the world from falsehood, superstition, selfishness, wrong, and oppression. He is here consoled, and told that he was not to fret himself to death: he was nobly doing his duty, and, as after-events showed, the seed of Truth was already germinating, although this was not visible at the time. Besides, these "chiefs" and "leaders" were only strutting in false plumes: their glory was soon to fade for ever.

2332. This world's goods—, worldly power, glory, wealth, position, and all that men scramble for,—are but a fleeting show. The possession or want of them does not betoken a man's real value or position in the spiritual world, the world which is to endure. Yet they have their uses. They test a man's sterling quality. He who becomes their slave loses rank in the spiritual world. He who uses them if he gets them, and does not fall into despair if he does not get them, shows his true mettle and quality. His conduct proclaims him.

Dust and dry soil  
(Without growth or herbage).<sup>2333</sup>

9. **Or** dost thou reflect<sup>2334</sup>  
That the Companions of the  
Cave<sup>2335</sup>  
And of the Inscription<sup>2336</sup>  
Were wonders among Our Signs?

10. Behold, the youths betook  
themselves<sup>2337</sup>

صَعِيدًا جُرُزًا

أَمْ حَسِبْتَ أَنَّ أَصْحَابَ الْكَهْفِ  
وَالرَّقِيمِ كَانُوا مِنْ آيَاتِنَا عَجَبًا

إِذْ أَوَى الْفِتْيَةُ

2333. The fairest sights on the earth will become as dust and waste when this earth vanishes, and true spiritual values are restored.

2334. A wonderful story or allegory is now referred to. Its lessons are: (1) the relativity of Time, (2) the unreality of the position of oppressor and oppressed, persecutor and persecuted, on this earth, (3) the truth of the final Resurrection, when true values will be restored, and (4) the potency of Faith and Prayer to lead to the Right. Wonderful though such things may seem to be, they happen every day on God's earth!

2335. The unbelieving Quraish were in the habit of putting posers to the holy Prophet—questions which they got from Christians and Jews, which they thought the Prophet would be unable to answer. In this way they hoped to discredit him. One of these questions was about the floating Christian legend of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus. The Prophet not only told them the main story but pointed out the variations that were current, and rebuked men for disputing about such details (xviii. 22). Most important of all, he treated the story (under inspiration) as a parable, pointing to spiritual lessons of the highest value. This is Revelation in the highest sense of the term. The story is recapitulated in n. 2337 below.

2336. *Raq'im*—Inscription. So interpreted by the Jalālāin, and the majority of Commentators agree. See n. 2337, below. Others think it was the name of the dog; see xviii. 18, and n. 2330 below.

2337. The bare Christian story (without the spiritual lessons taught in the Qur-ān) is told in Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (end of chapter 33). In the reign of a Roman Emperor who persecuted the Christians, seven Christian youths of Ephesus left the town and hid themselves in a cave in a mountain near by. They fell asleep, and remained asleep for some generations or centuries. When the wall which sealed up the cave was being demolished, the youths awoke. They still thought of the world in which they had previously lived. They had no idea of the duration of time. But when one of them went to the town to purchase provisions, he found that the whole world had changed. The Christian religion, instead of being persecuted was fashionable: in fact it was now the State religion. His dress and speech, and the money which he brought, seemed to belong to another world. This attracted attention. The great ones of the land visited the Cave, and verified the tale by questioning the man's Companions.

When the story became very popular and circulated throughout the Roman Empire, we may well suppose that an Inscription was put up at the mouth of the Cave. See verse 9 and n. 2336. This inscription was probably to be seen for many years afterwards, as Ephesus was a famous city on the west coast of Asia Minor, about forty to fifty miles south of Smyrna. Later on, the Khalifa Wāthiq (842-846 A.D.) sent an expedition to examine and identify the locality, as he did about the Zūl-Qarnain barrier in Central Asia (Appendix VII at the end of this Sūra).

A popular story circulating from mouth to mouth would necessarily be vague as to dates and vary very much in details. Somewhere about the 6th century A.D. a Syriac writer reduced it to writing. He suggested that the youths were seven in number; that they went to sleep in the reign of the Emperor Decius (who reigned from 249 to 251 A.D., and who was a violent persecutor of Christianity); and that they awoke in the reign of Theodosius II, who reigned from 408 to 450 A.D. In our literature Decius is known as Daqyāns (from the adjectival Latin form Decianus), and the name stands as a symbol of injustice and oppression, and also of things old-fashioned and out-of-date, as *res Decianae* must have been two or three centuries after Decius.

To the Cave : they said,  
 " Our Lord! bestow on us  
 Mercy from Thyself,  
 And dispose of our affair  
 For us in the right way ! " 2338

إِلَى الْكَهْفِ فَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا آتِنَا  
 مِنْ لَدُنْكَ رَحْمَةً  
 وَهَيِّئْ لَنَا مِنْ أَمْرِنَا رَشَدًا ۝  
 ١١- فَظَنَّا رَبَّنَا عَلَىٰ أَذَانِهِمْ  
 فِي الْكَهْفِ سِنِينَ عَدَدًا ۝

11. Then We draw (a veil) 2339  
 Over their ears, for a number  
 Of years, in the Cave,  
 (So that they heard not) :

12. Then We roused them, 2340  
 In order to test which  
 Of the two parties was best 2341  
 At calculating the term  
 Of years they had tarried !

١٢- ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَاهُمْ لِنَعْلَمَ  
 أَيُّ الْحِزْبَيْنِ أَحْصَىٰ لِمَا لَبِئُوا أَلَدًا ۝

## SECTION 2.

13. We relate to thee their story  
 In truth : they were youths  
 Who believed in their Lord,  
 And We advanced them  
 In guidance : 2342

١٣- نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ بَأْسَهُم بِالْحَقِّ  
 إِنَّهُمْ فِتْيَةٌ آمَنُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ وَزِدْنَاهُمْ  
 هُدًى ۝

14. We gave strength to their  
 hearts : 2343

١٤- وَزَيَّنَّا عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ

2338. The youths hid in the cave, but they trusted in God, and made over their whole case to Him in prayer. Then they apparently fell asleep, and knew nothing of what was happening in the world outside.

2339. *Drew (a veil) over their ears :* i.e. sealed their ears, so that they heard nothing. As they were in the Cave they saw nothing. So they were completely cut off from the outer world. It was as if they had died, with their knowledge and ideas remaining at the point of time when they had entered the Cave. It is as if a watch stops at the exact moment of some accident, and any one taking it up afterwards can precisely fix the time of the accident.

2340. *Roused them :* or raised them up from their sleep or whatever condition they had fallen into (xviii. 18), so that they began to perceive the things around them, but only with the memories of the time at which they had ceased to be in touch with the world.

2341. When they awoke to consciousness, they had lost all count of time. Though they had all entered together, and lain together in the same place for the same length of time, their impressions of the time they had passed were quite different. Time is thus related to our own internal experiences. We have to learn the lesson that men as good as ourselves may yet differ as to their reactions to certain facts, and that in such matters disputes are unseemly. It is best to say, "God knows best" (xviii. 19).

2342. Their Faith carried them higher and higher on the road to Truth. Faith is cumulative. Each step leads higher and higher, by the grace and mercy of God.

2343. So that they were not afraid to speak out openly, and protest the truth of the Unity which they clearly saw in their own minds and hearts.

Behold, they stood up <sup>2344</sup>  
 And said : " Our Lord is  
 The Lord of the heavens  
 And of the earth : never  
 Shall we call upon any god  
 Other than Him : if we  
 Did, we should indeed  
 Have uttered an enormity !

15. " These our people have taken <sup>2345</sup>  
 For worship gods other  
 Than Him : why do they  
 Not bring forward an authority  
 Clear (and convincing)  
 For what they do ?  
 Who doth more wrong  
 Than such as invent  
 A falsehood against God ?

16. " When ye turn away  
 From them and the things  
 They worship other than God,  
 Betake yourselves to the Cave:  
 Your Lord will shower  
 His mercies on you  
 And dispose of your affair  
 Towards comfort and ease." <sup>2346</sup>

17. Thou wouldst have seen  
 The sun, when it rose,  
 Declining to the right <sup>2347</sup>  
 From their Cave, and when

إِذْ قَامُوا فَقَالُوا رَبُّنَا  
 رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَنْ  
 نَدْعُو مِنْ دُونِهِ إِلَهًا لَقَدْ  
 قُلْنَا إِذْ شَطَطًا ○

١٥- هَؤُلَاءِ قَوْمُنَا اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ  
 إِلَهَةً  
 لَوْلَا يَأْتُونَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِسُلْطَانٍ بَيِّنٍ  
 فَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِنْهُمْ أَفْتَرَى  
 عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا ○

١٦- وَإِذْ اخْتَرْتُمْ مَوْعِدَهُمْ وَمَا يَعْبُدُونَ إِلَّا  
 اللَّهَ فَأَوَّا إِلَى الْكَهْفِ  
 يَنْشُرْ لَكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ مِنْ رَحْمَتِهِ  
 وَيَهَيِّئْ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَمْرِكُمْ مَرْفَاقًا ○

١٧- وَتَرَى الشَّمْسَ إِذَا طَلَعَتْ  
 تَرُورُ عَنْ كَهْفِهِمْ ذَاتَ الْيَمِينِ وَإِذَا

2344. We may suppose them to have taken their stand and made a public protest before they betook themselves to the Cave (xviii. 16). The story really begins at xviii. 13, and the verses xviii. 9-12 may be considered as introductory. As the emphasis is on spiritual lessons, the facts stated in the introductory part are passed over lightly in the story.

2345. Besides the heathen gods, the cult of the Emperors also became fashionable in the Roman Empire in the first three centuries of the Christian Era. The statue of Diana (Artemis) at Ephesus had been one of the wonders of the ancient world. The city was a great seaport and the capital of Roman Asia. We may therefore imagine how the heathen cults must have flourished there. St. Paul spent three years preaching there, and was mobbed and assaulted, and compelled to leave (Acts, xix. 1-41).

2346. That is, 'do not be afraid of anything: put your whole case in the hands of God: at present you are being persecuted; he will solve your difficulties and give you ease and comfort'. The public protest ends at verse 15. In verse 16 they are taking counsel among themselves. After they go into the Cave, verse 17 introduces us to the scene where they are lying in the midst of the Cave in tranquil confidence in God.

2347. In the latitude of Ephesus, 38° north, i.e. well above the sun's northern declination, a cave opening to north, would never have the heat of the sun within it, as the sunny side would be the south. If the youths lay with their faces to the north, i.e. towards the entrance of the Cave, the sun would rise on their right side, declining to the south, and set on their left side, leaving them cool and comfortable.

It set, turning away  
From them to the left,  
While they lay in the open  
Space in the midst  
Of the Cave. Such are  
Among the Signs of God :  
He whom God guides<sup>2348</sup>  
Is rightly guided ; but he  
Whom God leaves to stray,----  
For him wilt thou find  
No protector to lead him  
To the Right Way.

عَرَبَتْ تَعْرِضُهُمْ ذَاتَ الشِّمَالِ  
وَهُمْ فِي قَفْوَةٍ مِنْهُ  
ذَلِكَ مِنْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ  
مَنْ يَهْدِ اللَّهُ فَهُوَ الْمُهْتَدِ  
وَمَنْ يَضِلَّ فَلَنْ يُجِدَ  
لَهُ وَلِيًّا مُرْسِدًا ۝

## SECTION 3.

18. **Thou** wouldst have deemed  
them<sup>2349</sup>

Awake, whilst they were asleep,  
And We turned them  
On their right and on  
Their left sides: their dog<sup>2350</sup>  
Stretching forth his two fore-legs  
On the threshold: if thou  
Hadst come up on to them,  
Thou wouldst have certainly  
Turned back from them in flight,  
And wouldst certainly have been  
Filled with terror of them.<sup>2351</sup>

وَوَحَّشَهُمْ كَفَاطًا وَهُمْ رُقُودٌ ۝  
وَنُقَلِّبُهُمْ ذَاتَ الْيَمِينِ وَذَاتَ الشِّمَالِ  
وَكَلْبُهُمْ بَاسِطٌ ذِرَاعَيْهِ بِالْوَصِيدِ  
لَوِ اطَّلَعْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ  
لَوَكَّنتَ مِنْهُمْ فِرَارًا  
وَلَكَّيْنْتَ مِنْهُمْ رُعبًا ۝

19. Such (being their state),  
We raised them up (from sleep),  
That they might question<sup>2352</sup>  
Each other. Said one of them,

وَكَذَلِكَ بَعَثْنَاهُمْ لِيَتَسَاءَلُوا بَيْنَهُمْ  
قَالَ قَائِلٌ مِنْهُمْ

2348. The youths, having faith and trust in God, found safety and refuge in the Cave. They were protected from the persecution and violence of the heathen. Their prayer (xviii. 16) was heard.

2349. Perhaps their eyes were open, even though their senses were sealed in sleep. They turned about on their sides as men do in sleep.

2350. The name of their dog is traditionally known as Qitmir, but see n. 2336 above.

2351. This graphic picture of the sleepers explains the human mechanism by which their safety was ensured by God from their Pagan enemies.

2352. This is the point of the story. Their own human impressions were to be compared, each with the other. They were to be made to see that with the best goodwill and the most honest enquiry they might reach different conclusions; that they were not to waste their time in vain controversies, but to get on to the main business of life; and that God alone had full knowledge of the things that seem to us so strange, or inconsistent, or inexplicable, or that produce different impressions on different minds. If they entered the Cave in the morning and woke up in the afternoon, one of them might well think they had been there only a few hours—only part of a day. This relative or fallacious impression of Time also gives us an inkling of the state when there will be no Time, of the Resurrection when all our little impressions of this life will be corrected by the final Reality. This mystery of Time has puzzled many contemplative minds. Cf. "Dark time that haunts us with the briefness of our days" (Thomas Wolfe in "Of Time and the River").

"How long have ye stayed (here)?"

They said, "We have stayed  
(Perhaps) a day, or part

Of a day". (At length)

They (all) said, "God (alone)

Knows best how long

Ye have stayed here...

Now send ye then one of you

With this money of yours<sup>2353</sup>

To the town: let him

Find out which is the best<sup>2354</sup>

Food (to be had) and bring some

To you, that (ye may)

Satisfy your hunger therewith:

And let him behave

With gentleness and courtesy,

And let him not inform

Anyone about you.

20. "For if they should  
Come upon you, they would  
Stone you or force you<sup>2355</sup>  
To return to their cult,  
And in that case ye would  
Never attain prosperity."<sup>2356</sup>

21. **Thus**<sup>2357</sup> did We make  
Their case known to the people,

كَمْ لَيْسْتُمْ  
قَالُوا لَيْسَتْ بِنَا يَوْمًا أَوْ بَعْضُ يَوْمٍ  
قَالُوا رَبُّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا لَيْسْتُمْ  
فَابْعَثُوا أَحَدَكُمْ بِوَرِقِكُمْ هَذِهِ  
إِلَى الْمَدِينَةِ فَلْيَنْظُرْ أَيُّهَا أَزْكَى  
طَعَامًا فَلْيَأْتِكُمْ بِرِزْقٍ مِنْهُ  
وَلْيَكَلِّفْ  
وَلَا يُشْعِرَنَّ بِكُمْ أَحَدًا

٢٠- إِنْهُمْ إِنْ يَظْهَرُوا عَلَيْكُمْ  
يَرْجُمُوكُمْ أَوْ يُعِيدُوكُمْ فِي مِلَّتِهِمْ  
وَلَنْ تَقْلَحَ حَوْلًا إِذَا أَبَدًا

٢١- وَكَذَلِكَ أَخْزَيْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ

2353. They now give up barren controversy and come to the practical business of life. But their thoughts are conditioned by the state of things that existed when they entered the Cave. The money they carried was the money coined in the reign of the monarch who persecuted the Religion of Unity and favoured the false cults of Paganism.

2354. *Best food: i.e., purest, most wholesome, perhaps also most suitable for those who rejected idol-worship, i.e., not dedicated to idols.* For they still imagined the world in the same state in which they had known it before they entered the Cave.

2355. They think that the world had not changed, and that the fierce persecution they knew was still raging, under which a man had to pay by his life for his religious faith, if he could not conform to Pagan worship.

2356. That is, never reap the spiritual good which your knowledge, instruction, and experience entitle you to attain. To become a renegade, to give up the Truth which you have won, simply on account of the fear of men, is the most despicable form of cowardice, and would rightly close the door of salvation if strict justice were to be done. But even then God's Mercy comes to the coward's aid so long as the door of repentance is open.

2357. *Thus:* in this way, by these means, i.e., by the sending out of one of the Sleepers with the old money to the town to buy provisions. His old-fashioned dress, appearance, and speech, and the old uncurrent money which he brought, at once drew the attention of people to him. When they learnt his story, they realised that God, Who can protect His servants thus and raise them up from sleep after such a long time, has power to raise up men for the Resurrection, and that His promise of goodness and mercy to those who serve Him is true and was exemplified in this striking way. On the other hand, to the men of the Cave themselves, it became clear that God can change the situation before we are aware, and our hope in Him is not futile, and that even when we are on the brink of despair, a revolution is surely working in the world before the world itself realises it.

That they might know  
That the promise of God  
Is true, and that there can  
Be no doubt about the Hour  
Of Judgment. Behold,  
They dispute among

themselves<sup>2358</sup>

As to their affair. (Some) said,  
"Construct a building over them":  
Their Lord knows best  
About them: those who prevailed  
Over their affair said,  
"Let us surely build a place  
Of worship over them."

22. (Some) say they were three,  
The dog being the fourth  
Among them; (others) say  
They were five, the dog  
Being the sixth,—doubtfully  
Guessing at the unknown;<sup>2359</sup>  
(Yet others) say they were  
Seven, the dog being the eighth.  
Say thou: "My Lord  
Knoweth best their number;  
It is but few that know<sup>2360</sup>  
Their (real case)". Enter not,  
Therefore, into controversies  
Concerning them, except  
On a matter that is clear<sup>2361</sup>  
Nor consult any of them  
About (the affair of) the  
Sleepers.<sup>2362</sup>

لِيَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ  
حَقٌّ وَأَنَّ السَّاعَةَ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهَا  
إِذْ يَتَنَازَعُونَ بَيْنَهُمْ أَمْرَهُمْ فَقَالُوا  
ابْنُوا عَلَيْهِمْ بُيُوتًا  
رَبُّهُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِهِمْ قَالَ الَّذِينَ  
عَلَى أَمْرِهِمْ  
لَنَتَّخِذَنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ مَسْجِدًا ۝

۲۲- سَيَقُولُونَ ثَلَاثَةٌ رَابِعُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ  
وَيَقُولُونَ خَمْسَةٌ سَادِسُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ  
نَحْمِلُ بِالْغَيْبِ وَيَقُولُونَ سَبْعَةٌ  
وَرَأْسُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ  
قُلْ رَبِّي أَعْلَمُ بِعَدَّتِهِمْ  
مَا يَعْلَمُهُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلٌ ۖ  
فَلَا تُسَارِفْ فِيهِمْ  
إِلَّا مِرَاءً ظَاهِرًا  
وَلَا تُنْتَفِثْ فِيهِمْ مِنْهُمْ أَحَدًا ۝

2358. The perversity of man is such that as soon as ever a glimpse of truth becomes manifest, men fall into controversies about it. The Sleepers could not judge about the duration of their stay in the Cave, but they wisely left the matter and attended to the urgent business of their lives. The towns-folk could not agree as to the significance of the event: they fell to discussing immaterial details. What sort of a memorial should they raise?—a house or a place of worship or a tablet? The place of worship was built. But the real significance of the spiritual meaning was missed until explained in the Qur-ān.

2359. The controversy in after ages raged about the number of the Sleepers: were they three or five or seven? People answered, not from knowledge, but from conjecture, Gibbon's version, which has now become best known, makes the number of Sleepers seven. The point was immaterial: the real point was the spiritual lesson.

2360. The true significance of the story is known only to a few. Most men discuss futile details, which are not in their knowledge.

2361. It is unprofitable to enter such immaterial controversies and many others that have been waged about Religion by shallow men from time immemorial. Yet, if there is a matter of clear knowledge from experience that matters, we must openly proclaim it, that the world may be brought to listen to God's Truth.

2362. Vulgar story-mongers as such know little of the true significance of stories and parable. We have a clear exposition in the Qur-ān. What need is there to go into details of the number of men in the Cave, or of the time they remained there?



- C. 134.—True knowledge is with God alone.  
 (xviii. 23-44.) We are not to dispute on matters  
 Of conjecture, but to rely on the Truth  
 That comes from God. As in the Parable,  
 The man who piles up wealth  
 And is puffed up with this world's goods,  
 Despising those otherwise endowed,  
 Will come to an evil end,  
 For his hopes were not built on God.

## SECTION 4.

23. ~~Do~~ say of anything,  
 "I shall be sure to do  
 So and so to-morrow"—
24. Without adding, "So please  
 God!" <sup>2363</sup>  
 And call thy Lord to mind  
 When thou forgettest, and say,  
 "I hope that my Lord  
 Will guide me ever closer  
 (Even) than this  
 To the right road." <sup>2364</sup>
25. So they stayed in their Cave  
 Three hundred years, and (some)  
 Add nine (more). <sup>2365</sup>

٢٣- وَلَا تَقُولَنَّ لِشَيْءٍ  
 إِنِّي فَاعِلٌ ذَٰلِكَ غَدًا ۝

٢٤- إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ ۚ وَاذْكُرْ رَبَّكَ  
 إِذَا نَسِيتَ وَقُلْ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَهْدِيَنِّي رَبِّي  
 لِأَقْرَبَ مِنْ هَٰذَا ارْتِدًّا ۝

٢٥- وَلَبِثُوا فِي كَهْفِهِمْ ثَلَاثَ مِائَةٍ  
 سِنِينَ وَازْدَادُوا تِسْعًا ۝

2363. Verses 23 and 24 are parenthetical. We must never rely upon our own resources so much as to forget God. If by any chance we do forget, we must come back to Him and keep Him in remembrance, as did the Companions of the Cave.

2364. In geometry the perfect circle is an ideal. Any given circle that we draw is not so perfect that we cannot draw one closer to the ideal. So in our life, there is always the hope of drawing closer and closer to God.

2365. This verse should be read with the next verse. In the floating oral tradition the duration of time in the Cave was given differently in different versions. When the tradition was reduced to writing, some Christian writers (e.g., Simeon Metaphrastes) named 372 years, some less. In round numbers 300 years in the solar Calendar would amount to 309 in the lunar Calendar. But the next verse points out that all these are mere conjectures: the number is known to God alone.

The authority on which Gibbon relies mentions two definite reigns, that of Decius (249-251 A.D.) and that of Theodosius II (408-450 A.D.). Taking 250 and 450, we get an interval of 200 years. But the point of the story does not lie in the name of any given Emperor, but in the fact that the beginning of the period coincided with an Emperor who persecuted: the Emperor's name at the end of the period may be taken as approximately correct, because the story was recorded within two generations afterwards. One of the worst Emperors to persecute the Christians was Nero who reigned from 54 to 68. If we took the end of his reign (A.D. 68) as the initial point, and (say) 440 A.D. as the final point, we get the 372 years of Simeon Metaphrastes. But none of these writers knew any more than we do. Our best course is to follow the Quranic injunction, "Say, God knows best how long they stayed" (xviii. 26). There is also a rebuke implied: 'do not imitate these men who love mischievous controversies!' After all, we are given the narrative more as a parable than as a story.

26. Say: "God knows best  
How long they stayed:  
With Him is (the knowledge  
Of) the secrets of the heavens  
And the earth: how clearly  
He sees, how finely He hears  
(Everything)! They have no  
protector<sup>2366</sup>  
Other than Him; nor does  
He share His Command  
With any person whatsoever."<sup>2367</sup>

27. **And** recite (and teach)  
What has been revealed  
To thee of the Book  
Of thy Lord: none  
Can change His Words,<sup>2368</sup>  
And none wilt thou find  
As a refuge other than Him.

28. And keep thy soul content  
With those who call  
On their Lord morning  
And evening, seeking<sup>2369</sup>  
His Face; and let not  
Thine eyes pass beyond them,  
Seeking the pomp and glitter  
Of this Life; nor obey  
Any whose heart We  
Have permitted to neglect  
The remembrance of Us,  
One who follows his own

٢٦- قُلِ اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا لَبِثُوا  
لَهُ غَيْبُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ  
أَبْصَرُ بِهِ وَأَسْمِعُ  
مَا لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ ذَلِيلٍ  
وَلَا يُشْرِكُ فِي حُكْمِهِ أَحَدًا ○

٢٧- وَأَنْتَ مَا أَوْحَى  
إِلَيْكَ مِنْ كِتَابِ رَبِّكَ  
لَا مُبَدِّلَ لِكَلِمَاتِهِ  
وَلَكِنْ يَجِدُ مِنْ دُونِهِ مُلْتَحِدًا ○

٢٨- وَاصْبِرْ نَفْسَكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ  
رَبَّهُمْ بِالْعُدْوَةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ  
يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ وَلَا تَعْدُ عَيْنُكَ عَنْهُمْ  
تُرِيدُ زِينَةَ الدُّنْيَا  
وَلَا تُطِعْ مَنْ أَغْفَلْنَا قَلْبَهُ  
عَنْ ذِكْرِنَا وَاتَّبَعَ

2366. Who are "they" in this sentence? They may be the Companions of the Cave, for they put themselves under the protection of God, and disowned all attribution of partners to Him. Or "they" may refer to the people in general who go wrong and become "Mushriks", i.e., attribute imaginary partners to God.

2367. In His Command: i.e., in God's government of the world, or in His Judgment on the Day of Judgment.

2368. His Words: His Commands, Decrees, Orders.

2369. Cf. vi. 52. and n. 870. The true servants of God are those whose hearts are turned to Him morning, noon, and night, and who seek not worldly gain, but God's Grace, God's own Self, His Presence and nearness. "Face" is the symbol of Personality or Self. Even if they are poor in this world's goods, their society gives far more inward and spiritual satisfaction than worldly grandeur or worldly attractions.

Desires, whose case has  
Gone beyond all bounds.<sup>2370</sup>

29. Say, "The Truth is  
From your Lord":  
Let him who will,  
Believe, and let him  
Who will, reject (it):<sup>2371</sup>  
For the wrong-doers We  
Have prepared a Fire  
Whose (smoke and flames),  
Like the walls and roof  
Of a tent will hem  
Them in: if they implore  
Relief they will be granted  
Water like melted brass,  
That will scald their faces.  
How dreadful the drink!  
How uncomfortable a couch  
To recline on!

30. As to those who believe  
And work righteousness,  
Verily We shall not suffer  
To perish the reward  
Of any who do  
A (single) righteous deed.<sup>2372</sup>

31. For them will be Gardens  
Of Eternity; beneath them  
Rivers will flow: they will  
Be adorned therein  
With bracelets of gold,  
And they will wear

هَوَاهُ وَكَانَ أَمْرُهُ فُرُطًا ۝

٢٩- وَقُلِ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ  
مَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُؤْمَرْ  
وَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُكْفُرْ ۖ  
إِنَّا أَعْتَدْنَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ نَارًا  
أَحَاطَ بِهُمْ سُرَادِقُهَا  
وَإِنْ يَسْتَغِيثُوا يُغَاثُوا  
بِمَاءٍ كَالْمُهْلِ يَشْوِي الْوُجُوهَ  
بِئْسَ الشَّرَابُ  
وَسَاءَتْ مُرْتَقَقًا ۝

٣٠- إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ  
إِنَّا لَا نُضِيعُ أَجْرَ  
مَنْ أَحْسَنَ عَمَلًا ۝

٣١- أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتُ عَدْنٍ  
يَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ يُمَلَّوْنَ فِيهَا  
مِنْ أَسَاوِرَ مِنْ ذَهَبٍ وَيَكْبَسُونَ

2370. For those who stray from God's path, God's Grace is ever anxious: it seeks to reclaim them and bring them back to the path. If such a one resists, and follows his own lusts, a point is reached when his case becomes hopeless. God's Grace does not then reach him, and he is abandoned to his pride and insolence. Beware of following the example or advice of such a one or seeking his society, or hankering after his wretched idols.

2371. Our choice in our limited Free-will involves a corresponding personal responsibility. We are offered the Truth: again and again is it pressed on our attention. If we reject it, we must take all the terrible consequences which are prefigured in the Fire of Hell. Its flames and roof will completely enclose us like a tent. Ordinarily there is water to quench the heat of thirst: here the only drink will be like molten brass, thick, heavy, burning, sizzling. Before it reaches the mouth of the unfortunates, drops of it will scald their faces as it is poured out.

2372. The righteous will be rewarded, as has been said again and again, beyond their merits. Not a single good deed of theirs will lose its reward, and the mercy of God will blot out their sins.

Green garments<sup>2373</sup> of fine silk  
And heavy brocade;  
They will recline therein  
On raised thrones,  
How good the recompense!  
How beautiful a couch  
To recline on!<sup>2374</sup>

ثِيَابًا خَضْرَاءَ مِنْ سُندُسٍ وَإِسْتَبْرَقٍ  
مُتَّكِئِينَ فِيهَا عَلَى الْأَرَائِكِ  
نِعْمَ الثَّوَابُ  
وَحَسَنَتْ مَرْفَعَاتُهُ

## SECTION 5.

32. Set forth to them  
The parable of two men:  
For one of them We provided  
Two gardens of grape-vines  
And surrounded them  
With date palms;  
In between the two  
We placed corn-fields.<sup>2375</sup>

۳۲- وَاضْرِبْ لَهُم مَّثَلًا زَوْجَيْنِ  
جَعَلْنَا لِأَحَدِهِمَا جَنَّتَيْنِ مِنْ أَعْنَابٍ  
وَحَفَفْنَاهُمَا بِنَخْلٍ  
وَجَعَلْنَا بَيْنَهُمَا مَازِعًا

33. Each of those gardens  
Brought forth its produce,  
And failed not in the least  
Therein: in the midst  
Of them We caused  
A river to flow.

۳۳- كُلَّتَا الْجَنَّتَيْنِ اِتْتَأَتْ أَكْلُهُمَا  
وَلَمْ تَظْلِمْ مِنْهُ شَيْئًا  
وَفُجِّرْنَا بَيْنَهُمَا نَهْرًا

34. (Abundant) was the produce  
This man had: he said  
To his companion, in the course  
Of a mutual argument:  
"More wealth have I  
Than you, and more honour  
And power in (my following  
Of) men."<sup>2376</sup>

۳۴- وَكَانَ لَهُ ثَمَرٌ فَقَالَ  
إِصَاحِبِهِ وَهُوَ يُحَادِّثُهُ  
أَنَا أَكْثَرُ مِنْكَ مَالًا  
وَأَعَزُّ نَفَرًا

2373 Heaven is figured by all the pictures of ease and comfort which we can imagine in our present state: Gardens; perpetual springs of crystal water, which we can see as in a landscape from above; the finest and most costly ornaments; the most beautiful clothes to wear; green is the colour mentioned, because it is the most refreshing to the eye, and fits in well with the Garden; the wearer takes the choice of fine silk or heavy brocade; and for rest and comfort, high thrones of dignity on which the blessed ones recline.

2374. This picture is in parallel contrast to the picture of Misery in the last verse.

2375. Here is a simple parable of the contrast between two men. One was purse-proud, and forgot that what he had was from God, by way of a trust and a trial in this life. The other boasted of nothing: his trust was in God. The worldly wealth of the first was destroyed, and he had nothing left. The second was the happier in the end.

2376. The two men began to compare notes. The arrogant one was puffed up with his possessions, his income, and his large family and following, and thought in his self-complacency that it would last for ever. He was also wrong in looking down on his Companion, who, though less affluent, was the better man of the two.

35. He went into his garden  
In a state (of mind)  
Unjust to his soul :<sup>2377</sup>  
He said, "I deem not  
That this will ever perish,
36. "Nor do I deem  
That the Hour (of Judgment)  
Will (ever) come :  
Even if I am brought back  
To my Lord, I shall  
Surely find (there)  
Something better in exchange."<sup>2378</sup>
37. His companion said to him,  
In the course of the argument  
With him: "Dost thou deny  
Him Who created thee  
Out of dust, then out of  
A sperm-drop, then fashioned  
Thee into a man?"<sup>2379</sup>
38. "But (I think) for my part  
That He is God,  
My Lord, and none shall I  
Associate with my Lord.
39. "Why didst thou not,  
As thou wentest into  
Thy garden, say: 'God's Will  
(Be done)! There is no power  
But with God!' If thou"<sup>2380</sup>

٣٥- وَدَخَلَ جَنَّتَهُ وَهُوَ ظَالِمٌ لِّنَفْسِهِ  
قَالَ مَا أَظُنُّ أَنْ تَمِيدَ هَذِهِ أَبَدًا ۝

٣٦- وَمَا أَظُنُّ السَّاعَةَ قَائِمَةً  
وَلَكِنْ تَرُدُّنِي إِلَى رَبِّي  
لَأَجِدَنَّ خَيْرًا مِنْهَا مُنْقَلَبًا ۝

٣٧- قَالَ لَهُ صَاحِبُهُ وَهُوَ يُحَاوِرُهُ  
أَكْفَرْتَ بِالَّذِي خَلَقَكَ مِنْ تُرَابٍ  
ثُمَّ مِنْ  
نُطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ سَوَّاهُ رَجُلًا ۝

٣٨- لَكِنَّمَا هُوَ اللَّهُ  
رَبِّي وَلَا أُشْرِكُ بِرَبِّي أَحَدًا ۝

٣٩- وَلَوْلَا إِذْ دَخَلْتَ جَنَّتَكَ قُلْتَ مَا  
شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ إِنَّ

2377. It was not wealth that ruined him, but the attitude of his mind. He was unjust, not so much to his neighbour, as to his own soul. In his love of the material, he forgot or openly defied the spiritual. As verse 37 shows, he took his companion with him, to impress him with his own importance, but the companion was unmoved.

2378. Here comes out the grasping spirit of the materialist. In his mind "better" means more wealth and more power, of the kind he was enjoying in this life, although in reality, even what he had, rested on hollow foundations and was doomed to perish and bring him down with it.

2379. The three stages of man's creation: first dust, or clay, itself created out of nothing, and forming the physical basis of his body; then, out of the produce of the earth as incorporated in the parents' body, the sperm-drop (with the corresponding receptive element); and then when the different elements were mixed in due proportion, and the soul was breathed into him, the fashioned man. Cf. lxxxvii. 2, and xv. 28-29.

2380. The companion's argument divides itself into five parts. (1) He remonstrates against the proud man denying God. (2) He, from his own spiritual experience, proclaims that God is One and that He is good. (3) He points out to him the better way of enjoying God's gifts with gratitude to Him. (4) He expresses contentment and satisfaction in God's dealings with him. (5) He gives a warning of the fleeting nature of this world's goods and the certainty of God's punishment for inordinate vanity.

Dost see me less than  
Thee in wealth and sons,

40. "It may be that my Lord  
Will give me something  
Better than thy garden,  
And that He will send  
On thy garden thunderbolts  
(By way of reckoning)  
From heaven, making it  
(But) slippery sand!—
11. "Or the water of the garden  
Will run off underground  
So that thou wilt never  
Be able to find it."<sup>2381</sup>
42. So his fruits (and enjoyment)  
Were encompassed (with ruin),  
And he remained twisting  
And turning his hands  
Over what he had spent<sup>2382</sup>  
On his property, which had  
(Now) tumbled to pieces  
To its very foundations,  
And he could only say,  
"Woe is me! Would I had  
Never ascribed partners  
To my Lord and Cherisher!"<sup>2383</sup>
43. Nor had he numbers  
To help him against God,  
Nor was he able  
To deliver himself.<sup>2384</sup>

تَرَىٰ أَنَا أَكْفَىٰ مِنْكَ مَالًا وَوَلَدًا ۝

۴۰-فَقُلْ لِي أَن يُؤْتِيَنِي  
خَيْرًا مِّنْ جَنَّتِكَ وَيُرْسِلْ  
عَلَيْهَا حُسْبَانًا  
مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ فَتُصْبِحَ صَعِيدًا زَلَقًا ۝

۴۱-أَوْ يُصْبِحَ مَأْوَاهَا غُورًا  
فَلَنْ تَسْتَطِيعَ لَهُ طَلَبًا ۝

۴۲-وَأُحِيطَ بِثَمَرِهِ  
فَأَصْبَحَ يُغْلِبُ كَفْيَهُ  
عَلَىٰ مَا اتَّفَقَ فِيهَا  
وَهُنَّ خَاوِيَةٌ عَلَىٰ عُرُوشِهَا  
وَيَقُولُ يَلَيْتَنِي  
لَمْ أُشْرِكْ بِرَبِّي أَحَدًا ۝

۴۳-وَلَمْ تَكُنْ لَهُ فِئَةٌ يَنْصُرُونَهُ مِن  
دُونِ اللَّهِ وَمَا كَانَ مُنتَصِرًا ۝

2381. The punishment was that of thunderbolts (*husbānan*), but the general meaning of the word includes any punishment by way of a reckoning (*hisāb*), and I think that an earthquake is also implied, as it alters water-courses, diverts channels underground, throws up silt and sand, and covers large areas with ruin, as happened in the Bihar earthquake of 1934.

2382. "Fruits", "spent", "twisting of the hands", should all be understood in a wide metaphorical sense, as well as the literal sense. He had great income and satisfaction, which were all gone. What resources he had lavished on his property! His thoughts had been engrossed on it; his hopes had been built on it; it had become the absorbing passion of his life. If he had only looked to God, instead of to the ephemeral goods of this world!

2383. In this case, in his mind, there was his own Self and his Mammon as rivals to God!

2384. He had built up connections and obliged dependants, and was proud of having his "quiver full". But where were all things when the reckoning came? He could not help himself; how could others be expected to help him?

44. There, the (only) protection comes  
From God, the True One.  
He is the Best to reward,  
And the Best to give success.<sup>2385</sup>

٢٣٨-فَالْأَوْلَىٰ لِلَّهِ الْحَقُّ  
هُوَ خَيْرُ ثَوَابٍ وَخَيْرُ عِقَابٍ ۝

C. 135.—The life of this world is ephemeral,  
(xviii. 45-59) And its gains will not last. Good Deeds  
Are the best of possessions in God's sight :  
All will be levelled up on the Day  
Of Judgment, and a new Order created  
On the basis of Truth, according to the Book  
Of Deeds. Pride is the root of Evil,  
Rebellion, and wrong. Who will choose  
Evil ones in preference to God? Let us accept  
Truth, for though Falsehood may flourish  
For a time, it must perish in the end.

#### SECTION 6.

45. Set forth to them  
The similitude of the life  
Of this world: it is like  
The rain which We send  
Down from the skies:  
The earth's vegetation absorbs it,  
But soon it becomes  
Dry stubble, which the winds<sup>2386</sup>  
Do scatter: it is (only) God  
Who prevails over all things.

٢٣٩-وَاضْرِبْ لَهُم مَّثَلَ الْحَيَاةِ  
الدُّنْيَا كَمَا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ  
فَاخْتَلَطَ بِهِ نَبَاتُ الْأَرْضِ  
فَأَصْبَحَ حَشِيشًا تَذْرُوهُ الرِّيحُ  
وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُّقْتَدِرًا ۝

46. Wealth and sons are allurements  
Of the life of this world:  
But the things that endure,  
Good Deeds, are best  
In the sight of thy Lord,  
As rewards, and best  
As (the foundation for) hopes.<sup>2387</sup>

٢٤٠-الْأَمْوَالُ وَالْبَنُونَ زِينَةُ الدُّنْيَا  
وَالْبَاقِيَاتُ الصَّالِحَاتُ خَيْرٌ  
عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ ثَوَابًا وَخَيْرٌ أَمَلًا ۝

2385. All else is vanity, uncertainty, the sport of Time. The only hope or truth is from God. Other rewards and other successes are illusory: the best Reward and the best Success come from God.

2386. Rain-water is a good thing in itself, but it does not last, and you can build no solid foundations on it. It is soon absorbed in the earth, and produces the flourishing appearance of grass and vegetation—for a time. Soon these decay, and become as dry stubble, which the least wind from any quarter will blow about like a thing of no importance. The water is gone, and so is the vegetation to which it lent a brave show of luxuriance temporarily. Such is the life of *this* world, contrasted with the inner and real Life, which looks to the Hereafter. God is the only enduring Power we can look to, supreme over all.

2387. Other things are fleeting: but Good Deeds have a lasting value in the sight of God. They are best as (or for) rewards in two ways: (1) they flow from us by the Grace of God, and are themselves rewards for our Faith; (2) they become the foundation of our hopes for the highest spiritual rewards in the Hereafter.

47. One Day We shall  
Remove the mountains, and thou  
Wilt see the earth  
As a level stretch,<sup>2388</sup>  
And We shall gather them,  
All together, nor shall We  
Leave out any one of them.

٣٧- وَيَوْمَ نُسَيِّرُ الْجِبَالَ وَ  
تَرَى الْأَرْضَ بَارِزَةً ۖ  
وَحَشَرْنَاهُمْ فَلَمْ نُغَادِرْ مِنْهُمْ أَحَدًا ۚ

48. And they will be marshalled  
Before thy Lord in ranks,  
(With the announcement),  
"Now have ye come to Us  
(Bare) as We created you"<sup>2389</sup>  
First: aye, ye thought  
We shall not fulfil  
The appointment made to you  
To meet (Us)!" :<sup>2390</sup>

٣٨- وَعَرَّضُوا عَلَىٰ رَبِّكَ صَفًّا  
لَقَدْ جِئْتُمُونَا كَمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ  
أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ بَلْ زَعَمْتُمْ  
أَلَّنْ نَجْعَلَ لَكُم مَّوْعِدًا ۚ

49. And the Book (of Deeds)  
Will be placed (before you);  
And thou wilt see  
The sinful in great terror  
Because of what is (recorded)  
Therein; they will say,  
"Ah! woe to us!  
What a book is this!  
It leaves out nothing  
Small or great, but  
Takes account thereof!"  
They will find all that they  
Did, placed before them:  
And not one will thy Lord  
Treat with injustice.<sup>2391</sup>

٣٩- وَوُضِعَ الْكِتَابُ  
فَتَرَى الْمُجْرِمِينَ مُسْفَحِينَ  
مَتَّافِينَ وَيَقُولُونَ يَوَيْلَنَا  
مَا لِي هَذَا الْكِتَابِ لَا يُغَادِرُ  
صَغِيرَةً وَلَا كَبِيرَةً  
إِلَّا أَحْصَاهَا ۖ  
وَوَجَدُوا مَا عَمِلُوا حَاضِرًا ۚ  
وَلَا يَظْلِمُ رَبُّكَ أَحَدًا ۚ

2388. On the Day of Judgment none of our present landmarks will remain.

2389. We shall stand as we were created, with none of the adventitious possessions that we collected in this life, which will all have vanished.

2390. The sceptics will now at length be convinced of the Reality which will be upon them.

2391. Personal responsibility, for all deeds in this life will then be enforced. But it will be done with perfect justice. Expressed in the forms of this world, it will amount to a clear statement of all we did in this life: the record will be put before us to convince us. As it will be a perfect record, with no omissions and no wrong entries, it will be perfectly convincing. Where there is punishment, it has been earned by the wrong-doer's own deeds, not imposed on him unjustly.



## SECTION 7.

50. Behold! We said  
To the angels, "Bow down<sup>2392</sup>  
To Adam": they bowed down  
Except Iblis. He was  
One of the Jinns,<sup>2393</sup> and he  
Broke the Command  
Of his Lord.  
Will ye then take him  
And his progeny<sup>2394</sup> as protectors  
Rather than Me? And they  
Are enemies to you!  
Evil would be the exchange<sup>2395</sup>  
For the wrong-doers!

51. I called them not  
To witness the creation  
Of the heavens and the earth,  
'Nor (even) their own creation:  
Nor is it for Me  
To take as helpers  
Such as lead (men) astray!<sup>2396</sup>

52. One Day He will say,  
"Call on those whom ye  
Thought to be My partners,"  
And they will call on them,  
But they will not listen  
To them; and We shall  
Make for them a place  
Of common perdition.<sup>2397</sup>

٥٠- وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا  
لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ كَانَ  
مِنَ الْإِنِّ فَفَسَقَ عَنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّهِ  
أَفَتَتَّخِذُونَهُ وَذُرِّيَّتَهُ أَوْلِيَاءَ  
مِنْ دُونِي وَهُمْ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ  
بَشَرٌ لِّلظَّالِمِينَ بَدَلًا ۝

٥١- مَا أَشْهَدُ لَهُمُ خَلْقَ  
السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلَا خَلْقَ  
أَنْفُسِهِمْ  
وَمَا كُنْتُ مُتَّخِذَ الْبَاطِلِينَ عَضُدًا ۝

٥٢- وَيَوْمَ يَقُولُ نَادُوا  
شُرَكَاءِيَ الَّذِينَ زَعَمْتُمْ فَدَعَوْهُمْ  
فَلَمْ يَسْتَجِيبُوا لَهُمْ  
وَجَعَلْنَا بَيْنَهُم مَّوْبِقًا ۝

2392. Cf. ii. 34, where the story is told of the fall of mankind through Adam. Here the point is referred to in order to bring home the individual responsibility of the erring soul. 'Iblis is your enemy; you have been told his history; will you prefer to go to him rather than to the merciful God, your Creator and Cherisher? What a false exchange you would make!'

2393. Cf. vi. 100, n. 929.

2394. *Satan's progeny*: we need not take the epithet literally. All his followers are his progeny: even the evil thoughts born in man out of Satan's influence are Satan's progeny.

2395. Out of the limited free-will that man has, if he were to choose Evil instead of Good, Satan instead of God, what a dreadful choice it would be! It would really be an evil exchange. For man is God's creature, cared for and cherished by Him. He abandons his Cherisher to become the slave of his enemy!

2396. God wants man's good: how can He take Evil for His partner?

2397. Some Commentators construe: "And We shall make a partition between them": i.e., the Evil ones will not even be seen by their misguided followers, much as the latter may go on calling on them.

53. And the Sinful shall see  
The Fire and apprehend  
That they have to fall  
Therein : no means will they  
Find to turn away therefrom.

## SECTION 8.

54. ~~We~~ We have explained  
In detail in this Qur-an,  
For the benefit of mankind,  
Every kind of similitude :  
But man is, in most things,<sup>2398</sup>  
Contentious.
55. And what is there  
To keep back men  
From believing, now that  
Guidance has come to them,  
Nor from praying for forgiveness  
From their Lord, but that  
(They ask that) the ways  
Of the ancients be repeated<sup>2399</sup>  
With them, or the Wrath  
Be brought to them  
Face to face ?
56. We only send the apostles  
To give glad tidings  
And to give warnings :<sup>2400</sup>  
But the Unbelievers dispute  
With vain argument, in order  
Therewith to weaken the truth,  
And they treat My Signs  
As a jest, as also the fact  
That they are warned !

٥٣- وَرَأَى الْبُجْرَمُونَ النَّارَ فَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُمْ  
مُواقِعُهَا  
وَلَمْ يَجِدُوا عَنْهَا مَصْرِفًا ۝

٥٤- وَلَقَدْ صَرَّفْنَا فِي هَٰذَا الْقُرْآنِ  
لِلنَّاسِ مِنْ كُلِّ مَثَلٍ  
وَكَانَ الْإِنْسَانُ أَكْثَرُ شَيْءٍ جَدَلًا ۝

٥٥- وَمَا مَنَعَ النَّاسَ أَنْ  
يُؤْمِنُوا إِذْ جَاءَهُمُ الْهُدَى  
وَيَسْتَغْفِرُوا لِأَزْوَاجِهِمُ الْأَوَّلِينَ  
ثَابِتٍ لَهُمْ سُنَّةُ الْأَوَّلِينَ  
أَوْ يَأْتِيَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ قُبُلًا ۝

٥٦- وَمَا نُرْسِلُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ إِلَّا مُبَشِّرِينَ  
وَمُنذِرِينَ ۚ وَيُجَادِلُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا  
بِالْبَاطِلِ لِيُدْحِضُوا بِهِ الْحَقَّ  
وَاتَّخَذُوا آيَاتِي  
وَمَا أَنْذَرُوا هُزُوًا ۝

2398 If men had not cultivated the habit of contention and obstinacy, they would have found that the parables and similitudes of Scripture had fully met their difficulties, and they would gladly have obeyed the call of God.

2399. But man's obstinacy and contrariness asks or calls for a repetition of what happened to the wicked and those who rejected Faith in ancient times. Out of curiosity, or by way of challenge, they seem to court the Punishment and ask that it be brought to pass at once. But it will come soon enough, and then they will think it too early ! Cf xliii 6 and n. 1810.

2400. The men of God are not sent to humour us with dialectics or satisfy the vulgar curiosity for miracles or dark unusual things. There is no "crookedness" (xviii. 1) in their preaching. They come to preach the Truth,—not in an abstract way, but with special reference to our conduct. They give us the good news of salvation lest we despair in the presence of Sin, and to warn us clearly of the dangers of Evil. Vain controversies about words only weaken their mission, or turn it into ridicule. The ungodly have a trick also of treating the earnest preaching to them itself as a jest and ridiculing it.

57. And who doth more wrong  
Than one who is reminded  
Of the Signs of his Lord,  
But turns away from them,  
Forgetting the (deeds) which his  
hands<sup>2401</sup>  
Have sent forth? Verily We  
Have set veils over their hearts  
Lest they should understand this,  
And over their ears, deafness.  
If thou callest them  
To guidance, even then  
Will they never accept guidance.

58. But your Lord is Most Forgiving,  
Full of Mercy. If He were  
To call them (at once) to account  
For what they have earned,  
Then surely He would  
Have hastened their Punishment:  
But they have their appointed  
Time, beyond which<sup>2402</sup> they  
Will find no refuge.

59. Such were the populations  
We destroyed when they  
Committed iniquities; but  
We fixed an appointed time  
For their destruction.<sup>2403</sup>

٥٧- وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ ذُكِّرَ  
بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِ فَأَعْرَضَ عَنْهَا  
وَلَيْسَ مَا قَدْ مَتَّ يَدُهُ  
إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ  
كَفَّةً أَنْ يَفْقَهُوهُ وَفِي أَدَانِهِمْ وَقْرًا  
وَأِنْ تَدْعُهُمْ إِلَى الْهُدَى  
فَلَنْ يَقْبَلُوا إِلَّا أَعْبَادًا ٥٨

٥٨- وَرَبُّكَ الْغَفُورُ ذُو الرَّحْمَةِ لَوْ  
يُؤَاخِذُهُمْ بِمَا كَسَبُوا لَاجَلَ الْعَذَابِ  
بَلْ لَهُمْ مَوْعِدٌ لَنْ يَجِدُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ  
مَوْسِلًا ٥٩

٥٩- وَتِلْكَ الْقُرَى أَهْلَكْنَاهُمْ لَمَّا  
ظَلَمُوا وَجَعَلْنَا لِبَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ مَوْعِدًا ٥٩

C. 136.—Moses was up against mysteries  
(xviii. 60-82.) Which he wanted to explore. He searched  
Out a man endued with knowledge  
Derived from the divine springs from which  
Flow the paradoxes of life. He is shown  
Three such paradoxes and how human

2401. Considering the power of sin, and how it gets hold of the hearts of men, and considering all the wrongs that men have done, it is the height of folly and injustice on their part to turn away from warnings which are given expressly for their good. But a stage of callousness is reached, when, by their own choice, they have rendered themselves impervious to God's Grace. At that stage a veil is put over their hearts and they are left alone for a time, that they may commune with themselves and perhaps repent and seek God's Mercy again. If they do not, it is their own loss. See next verse.

2402. *Min dāni-hi*: should we take the pronoun to refer to "the appointed time," or to "your Lord," mentioned at the beginning of the verse? Most Commentators take the former view, and I have translated accordingly. But I agree with those who take the latter view, and the better translation would be: "But they have their appointed time, and except with God, they will find no refuge." That means that even during the period allowed them, when they are left to wander astray as they have rejected God's Grace, God's Mercy is open to them if they will repent and return, but nothing but God's Mercy can save them.

2403. The instances of exemplary Punishment in former times were also subject to this rule, that God gives plenty of rope to the wicked, in case they might turn, repent, and obtain His Mercy.

Impatience is inconsistent with their true  
Understanding. The highest knowledge  
Comes not except by divine gift,  
And a constant, patient striving,  
With Faith, to apprehend something  
Of the purpose of the All-Wise God.

## SECTION 9.

60. Behold, Moses said <sup>2404</sup>  
To his attendant, "I will not  
Give up until I reach  
The junction of the two <sup>2405</sup>  
Seas or (until) I spend  
Years and years in travel. <sup>2406</sup>

١٠- وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَى لِفَتْنِهِ لَا  
أَبْرُمُ حَتَّىٰ أَتِلْقَىٰ جَمْعَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ أَوْ  
أَمْضِيَ حُقُبًا

61. But when they reached  
The Junction <sup>2407</sup>, they forgot  
(About) their Fish, <sup>2408</sup> which took  
Its course through the sea  
(Straight) as in a tunnel.

١١- فَلَمَّا بَلَغَا جَمْعَ بَيْنَهُمَا نَسِيَا حُوتَهُمَا  
فَاتَّخَذَ سَبِيلَهُ فِي الْبَحْرِ سَرَبًا

2404. This episode in the story of Moses is meant to illustrate four points. (1) Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. Even so that wisdom did not comprehend everything, even as the whole stock of the knowledge of the present day, in the sciences and the arts, and in literature, (if it could be supposed to be gathered in one individual), does not include all knowledge. Divine knowledge, as far as man is concerned, is unlimited. Even after Moses received his divine mission of Apostleship, his knowledge was not so perfect that it could not receive further additions. (2) Constant effort is necessary to keep our knowledge square with the march of time, and such effort Moses is shown to be making. (3) The mysterious man he meets (xviii. 65 and n. 2411), to whom Tradition assigns the name of *Khiḍḍr* (literally, Green), is the type of that knowledge which is ever green, fresh, and flourishing, ever in contact with life as it is actually lived, and not merely crystallised in books or second-hand sayings. The second kind of knowledge has its uses, but is only a stepping-stone to the first kind of knowledge, which is true knowledge and which is from God direct (xviii. 65). (4) There are paradoxes in life: apparent loss may be real gain; apparent cruelty may be real mercy; returning good for evil may really be justice and not generosity (xviii. 79-82). God's wisdom transcends all human calculation.

2405. The most probable geographical location, if any is required in a story that is a parable) is where the two arms of the Red Sea join together, viz., the Gulf of 'Aqaba and the Gulf of Suez. They enclose the Sinai Peninsula, in which Moses and the Israelites spent many years in their wanderings. There is also authority (see Baiḍhāwī's note) for interpreting the two seas as the two great streams of knowledge, which were to meet in the persons of Moses and *Khiḍḍr*.

2406. *Huqub* means a long but indefinite space of time. Sometimes it is limited to 80 years.

2407. Literally, 'the Junction of (the space) between the two,' i. e., the point at which the two seas were united.

2408. Moses was to go and find a servant of God, who would instruct him in such knowledge as he had not already got. He was to take a fish with him. The place where he was to meet his mysterious Teacher would be indicated by the fact that the fish would disappear when he got to that place. The fish is the emblem of the fruit of secular knowledge, which merges itself in divine knowledge at the point where human intelligence is ready for the junction of the two. But the mere merger of secular knowledge does not in itself produce divine knowledge. The latter has to be sought patiently.

62. When they had passed on  
(Some distance), Moses said  
To his attendant: "Bring us  
Our early meal; truly  
We have suffered much fatigue<sup>2409</sup>  
At this (stage of) our journey."

٦٢- فَلَمَّا جَاوَزَا قَالَ  
لِقَتْنِهِ إِنَّمَا عَدَدْنَا لَقَدْ  
لَقِينَا مِنْ سَفَرِنَا هَذَا ائْتِبَا ۝

63. He replied: "Sawest thou  
(What happened) when we  
Betook ourselves to the rock?  
I did indeed forget  
(About) the Fish: none but  
Satan made me forget  
To tell (you) about it:<sup>2410</sup>  
It took its course through  
The sea in a marvellous way!"

٦٣- قَالَ أَرَأَيْتَ إِذْ أَوَيْنَا  
إِلَى الصَّخْرَةِ فَإِنِّي نَسِيتُ الْفِشَ  
وَمَا أَتَيْنِيهِ إِلَّا الشَّيْطَانُ أَنْ أَذْكُرَهُ  
وَاتَّخَذَ سَبِيلَهُ فِي الْبَحْرِ عَجَبًا ۝

64. Moses said: "That was what  
We were seeking after":  
So they went back  
On their footsteps, following  
(The path they had come).

٦٤- قَالَ ذَلِكَ مَا كُنَّا نَبْغِ  
فَارْتَدَّا عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِمَا قَصَصًا ۝

65. So they found one<sup>2411</sup>  
Of Our servants,

٦٥- فَوَجَدَا عَبْدًا مِنْ عِبَادِنَا

2409. When they came to the Junction of the Seas, Moses forgot about the fish, and his attendant forgot to tell him of the fact that he had seen the fish escaping into the sea in a marvellous way. They passed on, but the stages now became heavier and heavier, and more fatiguing to Moses. So when our old knowledge is exhausted, and we come to the brink of new knowledge, we have a feeling of strangeness, heaviness, and difficulty, especially when we want to pass the new knowledge by and do not make it our own. Some refreshment, even if it be in our old traditional way, is required to sustain us. But we must retrace our steps, and seek the accredited repository of the knowledge which is our quest. It is our business to seek him out. We shall not find him without effort.

2410. The attendant actually saw the fish swimming away in the sea, and yet "forgot" to tell his master. In his case the "forgetting" was more than forgetting. Inertia had made him refrain from telling the important news. In such matters inertia is almost as bad as active spite, the suggestion of Satan. So new knowledge or spiritual knowledge is not only passed by in ignorance, but sometimes by culpable negligence.

2411. *One of Our servants*: his name is not mentioned in the Qur-ān, but Tradition gives it as *Khidr*. Round him have gathered a number of picturesque folk-tales, with which we are not here concerned. "*Khidr*" means "Green": his knowledge is fresh and green, and drawn out of the living sources of life, for it is drawn from God's own Presence. He is a mysterious being, who has to be sought out. He has the secrets of the paradoxes of Life, which ordinary people do not understand, or understand in a wrong sense, as we shall see further on. The nearest equivalent figure in the literature of the People of the Book is Melchizedek or Melchisedek (the Greek form in the New Testament). In Gen. xiv. 18-20, he appears as king of Salem, priest of the Most High God: he blesses Abraham, and Abraham gives him tithes. St Paul allegorises him in his Epistle to the Hebrews (v. 6-10; vii. 1-10): "he was without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life". That is to say, he appeared mysteriously: neither his parentage nor his pedigree is known, and he seems to live for all time. These qualities are also attributed to *Khidr* in Muslim tradition.

On whom We had bestowed  
Mercy from Ourselves  
And whom We had taught  
Knowledge from Our own <sup>2412</sup>  
Presence.

إِنَّمَا رَحْمَةً مِنَّا  
وَعَلَّمْنَاهُ مِن لَّدُنَّا عِلْمًا ۝

66. Moses said to him :  
" May I follow thee,  
On the footing that  
Thou teach me something  
Of the (Higher) Truth  
Which thou hast been taught ? " <sup>2413</sup>

٦٦- قَالَ لَهُ مُوسَى هَلْ أَتَّبِعُكَ  
عَلَى أَنْ تُعَلِّمَنِي  
مِمَّا عَلَّمْتَ رُسُلًا ۝

67. (The other) said : " Verily  
Thou wilt not be able  
To have patience with me ! " <sup>2414</sup>

٦٧- قَالَ إِنَّكَ لَنْ تَسْتَطِيعَ مَعِيَ  
صَبْرًا ۝

68. " And how canst thou  
Have patience about things  
About which thy understanding  
Is not complete ? " <sup>2415</sup>

٦٨- وَكَيْفَ تَصْبِرُ عَلَى  
مَا لَمْ تُحِط بِهِ خُبْرًا ۝

69. Moses said : " Thou wilt  
Find me, if God so will,  
(Truly) patient : nor shall I  
Disobey thee in aught. " <sup>2416</sup>

٦٩- قَالَ سَتَجِدُنِي إِن شَاءَ اللَّهُ  
صَابِرًا وَلَا أَعْصِي لَكَ أَمْرًا ۝

2412. Khidr had two special gifts from God : (1) Mercy from His own Presence, and (2) Knowledge from His own Presence. The first freed him from the ordinary incidents of daily human life ; and the second entitled him to interpret the inner meaning and mystery of events, as we shall see further on. Much could be and has been written about this from the mystic point of view.

2413. Moses, not understanding the full import of what he was asking, makes a simple request. He wants to learn something of the special Knowledge which God had bestowed on Khidr.

2414. Khidr smiles, and says that there will be many things which Moses will see with him, which Moses will not completely understand and which will make Moses impatient. The highest spiritual knowledge often seems paradoxical to those who have not the key to it.

2415. Khidr does not blame Moses. Each one of us can only follow our own imperfect lights to the best of our judgment, but if we have Faith, we are saved many false steps.

2416. Moses has Faith. He adopts the true attitude of the learner to the Teacher, and promises to obey in all things, with the help of God. The Teacher is doubtful, but permits him to follow him on condition that he asks no questions about anything until the Teacher himself mentions it first.

70. The other said : " If then  
Thou wouldst follow me,  
Ask me no questions  
About anything until I  
Myself speak to thee  
Concerning it."

## SECTION 10.

71. So they both proceeded :  
Until, when they were  
In the boat, he scuttled it.<sup>2417</sup>  
Said Moses : " Hast thou  
Scuttled it in order  
To drown those in it ?  
Truly a strange thing  
Hast thou done ! "

72. He answered : " Did I not  
Tell thee that thou canst  
Have no patience with me ? "

73. Moses said : " Rebuke me not  
For forgetting, nor grieve me  
By raising difficulties  
In my case."

74. When they proceeded :  
Until, when they met  
A young man, he slew him.<sup>2418</sup>  
Moses said : " Hast thou  
Slain an innocent person  
Who had slain none ?  
15 Truly an unheard of thing  
30 Hast thou done ! "

٤٠- قَالَ وَلَئِنْ أَتَيْتَنِي  
فَلَا تَسْأَلْنِي عَنْ شَيْءٍ وَحَتَّى  
أُحَدِّثَ لَكَ مِنْهُ ذِكْرًا ۝

٤١- فَأَنْطَلَقَا حَتَّى إِذَا  
رَكِبَا فِي السَّفِينَةِ خَرَقَهَا  
قَالَ أَخَرَقْتُهَا لِتَغْرِقَ أَهْلَهَا  
لَقَدْ جِئْتَ شَيْئًا إِمْرًا ۝

٤٢- قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ لَكَ لَنْ تَسْتَطِيعَ  
مَعِيَ صَبْرًا ۝

٤٣- قَالَ لَا تَأْخُذْ بَعِثْ فِي بَنَاتِي  
وَلَا تَزِمْنِي مِنْ أَمْرِ عُسْرًا ۝

٤٤- فَأَنْطَلَقَا حَتَّى إِذَا لَقِيَا  
غُلَامًا فَقَتَلَهُ قَالَ  
أَقْتَلْتُ نَفْسًا زَكِيَّةً بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ  
لَقَدْ جِئْتَ شَيْئًا نَكِرًا ۝

2417. The explanation follows in xviii. 79.

2418. The explanation follows in xviii. 80-81.

75. He answered: "Did I not  
Tell thee that thou canst  
Have no patience with me?"

76. (Moses) said: "If ever I  
Ask thee about anything  
After this, keep me not  
In thy company: then wouldst  
Thou have received (full) excuse  
From my side.

77. **فَإِذَا** When they proceeded:  
Until, when they came  
To the inhabitants of a town,  
They asked them for food,  
But they refused them <sup>2419</sup>  
Hospitality. They found there  
A wall on the point of  
Falling down, but he  
Set it up straight.  
(Moses) said: "If thou  
Hadst wished, surely thou  
Couldst have exacted some  
Recompense for it!" <sup>2420</sup>

78. He answered: "This is  
The parting between me  
And thee: now will I  
Tell thee the interpretation  
Of (those things) over which  
Thou wast unable  
To hold patience." <sup>2421</sup>

79. **فَالسَّفِينَةُ** As for the boat,  
It belonged to certain  
Men in dire want:  
They plied on the water:

٧٥- قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ لَكَ إِنَّكَ لَنْ  
تَسْتَطِيعَ مَعِيَ صَبْرًا ○

٧٦- قَالَ إِنْ سَأَلْتَكَ عَنْ شَيْءٍ  
بَعْدَ هَذَا فَلَا تُصِيبْنِي  
قَدْ بَلَغْتَ مِنْ لَدُنِّي عُذْرًا ○

٧٧- فَأَنْطَلَقَا حَتَّى إِذَا أَتَيَا  
أَهْلَ قَرْيَةٍ يَسْأَلُونَ اسْتَطْعَمًا أَهْلَهَا  
فَاَبْوَأَ أَنْ يُضَيِّفُوهُمَا  
فَوَجَدَا فِيهَا جِدَارًا  
يُرِيدُ أَنْ يَنْقَضَ فَأَقَامَهُ  
قَالَ لَوْ شِئْتَ لَخِذْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ جُرْأًا ○

٧٨- قَالَ هَذَا فِرَاقُ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنِكَ  
سَأُنَبِّئُكَ بِتَأْوِيلِ  
مَا لَمْ تَسْتَطِعْ عَلَيْهِ صَبْرًا ○

٧٩- هَذِهِ السَّفِينَةُ فَكَانَتْ لِمَسْكِينٍ  
يَعْمَلُونَ فِي الْبَحْرِ

2419. The inhabitants were churlish. They broke the universal Eastern rule of hospitality to strangers, and thus showed themselves, beyond the pale of ordinary human courtesies. Note that they would have been expected to *offer* hospitality of themselves, unasked. Here Moses and his companion actually had to ask for hospitality and were refused point-blank.

2420. As they were refused hospitality, they should, as self-respecting men, have shaken the dust of the town off their feet, or shown their indignation in some way. Instead of that, *Khidr* actually goes and does a benevolent act. He rebuilds for them a falling wall, and never asks for any compensation for it. Perhaps he employed local workmen for it and paid them wages, thus actually benefiting a town which had treated him and his companion so shabbily! Moses is naturally surprised and asks, "Could you not at least have asked for the cost?"

2421. The story and the interpretation are given with the greatest economy of words. It would repay us to search for the meaning in terms of our own inner and outer experience.



I but wished to render it  
Unserviceable, for there was  
After them a certain king  
Who seized on every boat  
By force.<sup>2422</sup>

فَارَدْتُ أَنْ أُجْبِهَهَا وَكَانَ ذَوَاءُكُمْ يَكْلُؤُ  
يَأْخُذُ كُلُّ سَفِينَةٍ غَصْبًا ٥

80. "As for the youth,  
His parents were people  
Of Faith, and we feared  
That he would grieve them  
By obstinate rebellion  
And ingratitude (to God and  
man).<sup>2423</sup>

٨٠- وَأَمَّا الْعَلَمُ فَكَانَ أَبَوُهُ  
مُؤْمِنِينَ فَخَشِينَا  
أَنْ يُرْهِقَهُمَا طُغْيَانًا وَكُفْرًا ٥

81. "So we desired that  
Their Lord would give them  
In exchange (a son)  
Better in purity (of conduct)  
And closer in affection.<sup>2424</sup>

٨١- فَارَدْنَا أَنْ يُبَدِّلَهُمَا رَبُّهُمَا  
خَيْرًا مِنْهُ زَكَاةً وَأَقْرَبَ رُحْمًا ٥

82. "As for the wall,  
It belonged to two youths,  
Orphans, in the Town;  
There was, beneath it,  
A buried treasure, to which  
They were entitled; their father

٨٢- وَأَمَّا الْجِدَارُ فَكَانَ لِغُلَامَيْنِ  
يَتِيمَيْنِ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ وَكَانَ تَحْتَهُ  
كَنْزٌ لَهُمَا وَكَانَ أَبُوهُمَا

2422. They went on the boat, which was plying for hire. Its owners were not even ordinary men who plied for trade. They had been reduced to great poverty, perhaps from affluent circumstances, and deserved great commiseration, the more so as they preferred an honest calling to begging for charity. They did not know, but *Khidi'r* did, that that boat, perhaps a new one, had been marked down to be commandeered by an unjust king who seized on every boat he could get—it may have been, for warlike purposes. If this boat had been taken away from these self-respecting men, they would have been reduced to beggary, with no resources left them. By a simple act of making it unseaworthy, the boat was saved from seizure. The owners could repair it as soon as the danger was past. *Khidi'r* probably paid liberally in fares, and what seemed an unaccountably cruel act was the greatest act of kindness he could do in the circumstances.

2423. This seemed at first sight even a more cruel act than scuttling the boat. But the danger was also greater. *Khidi'r* knew that the youth was a potential parricide. His parents were worthy, pious people, who had brought him up with love. He had apparently gone wrong. Perhaps he had already been guilty of murders and robberies and had escaped the law by subtleties and fraud. See next note.

2424. The son was practically an outlaw,—a danger to the public and a particular source of grief to his righteous parents. Even so, his summary capital punishment would have been unjustified if *Khidi'r* had been acting on his own. But *Khidi'r* was not acting on his own: see the latter part of the next verse. The plural "we" also implies that he was not acting on his own. He was acting on higher authority and removing a public scourge, who was also a source of extreme sorrow and humiliation to his parents. His parents are promised a better-behaved son who would love them and be a credit to them.

Had been a righteous man :<sup>2425</sup>  
 So thy Lord desired that  
 They should attain their age<sup>2426</sup>  
 Of full strength and get out  
 Their treasure—a mercy  
 (And favour) from thy Lord.  
 I did it not of my own<sup>2427</sup>  
 Accord. Such is the interpretation  
 Of (those things) over which  
 Thou wast unable  
 To hold patience."

صَالِحًا فَلَا أَدْرَبَكَ  
 أَنْ يَبْلُغَا  
 أَشَدَّ هُمًا وَيَسْتَخْرِجَا كَرَهُمَا  
 رَحْمَةً مِنْ رَبِّكَ  
 وَمَا فَعَلْتُهُ عَنْ أَمْرِي ذَلِكَ تَأْوِيلُ  
 مَا لَمْ تَسْطِعْ عَلَيْهِ صَبْرًا

- C. 137.—Three episodes in the life of a great King,  
 (xviii. 83-110.) *Zul-qarnain*, illustrate how power  
 And opportunities should be used in the service  
 Of God: he punished the guilty indeed,  
 But was kind to the righteous; he left  
 Primitive people their freedom of life;  
 And he protected industrious people from grasping  
 Neighbours. But he relied upon God, and made them  
 Remember the Day of Judgment, when all  
 Will see the Truth and receive the Punishments  
 And Rewards earned in their present Life.

#### SECTION 11.

83. They ask thee concerning  
*Zul-qarnain*.<sup>2428</sup> Say,

۸۳- وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنْ ذِي الْقَرْنَيْنِ قُلْ

2425. The wall was in a ruinous state. If it had fallen, the treasure buried beneath it would have been exposed and would certainly have been looted, among so churlish and selfish a people. See n. 2419 above. The treasure had been collected and buried by a righteous man. It was not, in any sense of the word, ill-gotten gains: it was buried expressly in the interests of the orphans by their father before his death. It was intended that the orphans should grow up and safely take possession of their heritage. It was also expected that they would be righteous men like their father, and use the treasure in good works and in advancing righteousness among an otherwise wicked community. There were thus both public and private interests involved in all the three incidents. In the second incident *Khiḍr* uses the word "we", showing that he was associating in his act the public authorities of the place, who had been eluded by the outlaw.

2426. *Age of full strength*: Cf. xvii. 34 and n. 2218.

2427. Those who act, not from a whim or a private impulse of their own, but from higher authority, have to bear the blame, with the vulgar crowd, for acts of the greatest wisdom and utility. In human affairs many things are inexplicable, which are things of the highest wisdom in the Universal Plan.

2428. Literally, "the Two-horned one", the King with the Two Horns, or the Lord of the Two Epochs. Who was he? In what age, and where did he live? The *Qur-ān* gives us no material on which we can base a positive answer. Nor is it necessary to find an answer, as the story is treated as a Parable. Popular opinion identifies *Zul-qarnain* with Alexander the Great. An alternative suggestion is an ancient Persian King, or a pre-historic *Himyarite* King. See a brief account of the controversy in Appendix VII, printed at the end of this *Sūra*.

*Zul-qarnain* was a most powerful king, but it was God, Who, in His universal Plan, gave him power and provided him with the ways and means for his great work. His sway extended over East and West, and over people of diverse civilisations. He was just and righteous, not selfish or grasping. He protected the weak and punished the unlawful and the turbulent. Three of his expeditions are described in the text, each embodying a great ethical idea involved in the possession, of kingship or power.

"I will rehearse to you  
Something of his story."

84. Verily We established his power  
On earth, and We gave him  
The ways and the means  
To all ends.<sup>2429</sup>

85. One (such) way he followed,

86. Until, when he reached  
The setting of the sun,<sup>2430</sup>  
He found it set  
In a spring of murky water:  
Near it he found a People:  
We said: "O Zul-qarnain!  
(Thou hast authority,) either  
To punish them, or  
To treat them with kindness."<sup>2431</sup>

87. He said: "Whoever doth wrong,  
Him shall we punish; then  
Shall he be sent back<sup>2431</sup>  
To his Lord; and He will  
Punish him with a punishment  
Unheard of (before).

88. "But whoever believes,  
And works righteousness,—

سَأْتَلُوا عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْهُ ذِكْرًا ۝

۸۴- إِنَّا مَكَّنَّا لَهُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَآتَيْنَاهُ  
مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ سَبِيلًا ۝

۸۵- فَأَتْبَعَهُ سَبِيلًا ۝

۸۶- حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ مَغْرِبَ الشَّمْسِ  
وَجَدَهَا تَغْرُبُ فِي عَيْنٍ حَمِئَةٍ  
وَوَجَدَ عِنْدَهَا قَوْمًا قُلْنَا يَذَّكَّرُ الَّذِينَ  
إِمَّا أَنْ نُعْذِّبَ وَإِمَّا أَنْ نَتَّخِذَ فِيهِمْ  
حُسْنًا ۝

۸۷- قَالَ أَمَّا مَنْ ظَلَمَ فَسَوْفَ نُعَذِّبُهُ  
ثُمَّ يُرَدُّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِ  
فَيُعَذِّبُهُ عَذَابًا نَكِيرًا ۝

۸۸- وَأَمَّا مَنْ آمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا

2429. Great was his power and great were his opportunities ("ways and means"), which he used for justice and righteousness. But he recognised that his power and opportunities were given to him as a trust by God. He had faith, and did not forget God.

2430. This is the first of the three episodes here mentioned, his expedition to the west. "Reaching the setting of the sun" does not mean the extreme west, for there is no such thing. West and East are relative terms. It means a western expedition terminated by a "spring of murky water." This has puzzled Commentators, and they have understood this to mean the dark, tempestuous sea. If Zul-qarnain is Alexander the Great, the reference is easily understood to be to Lychinitis (now Ochrida), west of Macedonia. It is fed entirely by underground springs in a limestone region, where the water is never very clear. (See Appendix VII at the end of this Sūra.)

2431. He had great power and a great opportunity. He got authority over a turbulent and unruly people. Was he going to be severe with them and chastise them, or was he going to seek peace at any price, i.e., to wink at violence and injustice so long as it did not affect his power? He chose the better course, as described in the next verse. To protect the weak and the innocent, he punished the guilty and the headstrong, but he remembered always that the true Punishment would come in the Hereafter—the true and final justice before the throne of God.

2432. Though most powerful among kings, he remembered that his power was but human, and given by God. His punishments were but tentative, to preserve the balance of this life as he could appraise it. Even if his punishment was capital ("wrong-doer sent back to his Lord") it was nothing compared to the spiritual consequences of sin, in the final Justice of God.



94. They said : " O Zul-qarnain !  
The Gog and Magog (people) <sup>2439</sup>  
Do great mischief on earth :  
Shall we then render thee  
Tribute in order that  
Thou mightest erect a barrier  
Between us and them ?

٩٤- قَالُوا يٰذَا الْقَرْنَيْنِ اِنَّ يٰجُوجَ وَ  
مَاجُوجَ  
مُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْاَرْضِ هَلْ نَجْعَلُ لَكَ  
خَرْجًا عَلٰى اَنْ تَجْعَلَ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَهُمْ سَدًّا ۝

95. He said : " (The power) in which  
My Lord has established me  
Is better (than tribute) : <sup>2440</sup>  
Help me therefore with strength  
(And labour) : I will  
Erect a strong barrier  
Between you and them :

٩٥- قَالَ مَا مَلَكَئِيْ فِيْهِ مَرَاتِيْ  
خَيْرٌ فَاَعِيْنُوْنِيْ بِقُوَّةٍ  
اَجْعَلْ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُمْ رَدْمًا ۝

96. " Bring me blocks of iron." <sup>2441</sup>  
At length, when he had  
Filled up the space between  
The two steep mountain-sides,  
He said, " Blow (with your  
bellows) " :  
Then, when he had made <sup>2442</sup>  
It (red) as fire, he said :  
" Bring me, that I may  
Pour over it, molten lead."

٩٦- اَتَوْنِيْ زُبْرَ الْحَدِيْدِ  
حَتّٰى اِذَا سَاوٰى بَيْنَ الصَّدَفَيْنِ  
قَالَ انْفُخُوْا  
حَتّٰى اِذَا جَعَلَهُ نَارًا  
قَالَ اَتَوْنِيْ اَوْفِرْغْ عَلَيْهِ وَظُرًا ۝

2439. Who were the Gog and Magog people? This question is connected with the question, Who was Zul-qarnain? Some discussion on the question will be found in Appendix VII at the end of this Sūra.

What we are mainly concerned with is the spiritual interpretation. The Conqueror had now arrived among a people who were different in speech and race from him, but not quite primitive, for they were skilled in the working of metals, and could furnish blocks (or bricks) of iron, melt metals with bellows or blow-pipes, and prepare molten lead (xviii. 96). Apparently they were a peaceable and industrious race, much subject to incursions from wild tribes who are called Gog and Magog. Against these tribes they were willing to purchase immunity by paying the Conqueror tribute in return for protection. The permanent protection they wanted was the closing of a mountain gap through which the incursions were made.

2440. Zul-qarnain was not greedy and did not want to impose a tribute to be carried away from an industrious population. He understood the power which God had given him, to involve duties and responsibilities on his part—the duty of protecting his subjects without imposing too heavy a taxation on them. He would provide the motive force and organising skill. Would they obey him and provide the material and labour, so that they could close the gap with a strong barrier, probably with well-secured gates? The word *radm*, translated "Barrier," does not necessarily mean a wall, but rather suggests a blocked door or entrance.

2441. I understand the defences erected to have been a strong barrier of iron, with iron Gates. The jambs of the Gates were constructed with blocks or bricks of iron, and the interstices filled up with molten lead, so as to form an impregnable mass of metal. It may be that there was a stone wall also, but that is not mentioned. There was none in the Iron Gate near Bukhārā; see Appendix VII at the end of this Sūra.

2442. Made it (red) as fire: what does "it" refer to? Probably to the iron, either in sheets or blocks, to be welded with the molten lead.

97. Thus were they made  
Powerless to scale it  
Or to dig through it.<sup>2443</sup>

98. He said: "This is  
A mercy from my Lord:<sup>2444</sup>  
But when the promise  
Of my Lord comes to pass,  
He will make it into dust;  
And the promise of  
My Lord is true."

99. ♀ On that day We shall  
Leave them to surge  
Like waves on one another:<sup>2445</sup>  
The trumpet will be blown,  
And We shall collect them  
All together.

100. And We shall present  
Hell that day for Unbelievers  
To see, all spread out,—<sup>2446</sup>

101. (Unbelievers) whose eyes  
Had been under a veil  
From (seeing) My Message,  
And who had been  
Deaf (thereto).<sup>2447</sup>

٩٧- فَمَا اسْتَطَاعُوا أَنْ يَظْهَرُوهُ  
وَمَا اسْتَطَاعُوا لَهُ نَقْبًا ۝

٩٨- قَالَ هَذَا رَحْمَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّي  
فَإِذَا جَاءَ وَعْدُ رَبِّي جَعَلَهُ دَكَّاءَ  
وَكَانَ وَعْدُ رَبِّي حَقًّا ۝

٩٩- وَتَرَكْنَاهُمْ بَعْضُهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ  
يُكْوِجُ فِي بَعْضٍ وَنُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ  
فَجَمَعْنَاهُمْ جَمْعًا ۝

١٠٠- وَاعْرَضْنَاهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْكَافِرِينَ  
عَرْضًا ۝

١٠١- الَّذِينَ كَانَتْ أَعْيُنُهُمْ فِي غِطَاءٍ  
عَنْ ذِكْرِي وَكَانُوا لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ  
سَمْعًا ۝

2443. The iron wall and gates and towers were sufficiently high to prevent their being scaled and sufficiently strong with welded metal to resist any attempt to dig through them.

2444. After all the effort which Zul-qarnain has made for their protection, he claims no credit for himself beyond that of discharging his duty as a ruler. He turns their attention to God, Who has provided the ways and means by which they can be helped and protected. But all such human precautions are apt to outlast their time. The time must come when they will crumble into dust. God has said so in His Revelation; and His Word is true.

And so the spiritual lesson from the third episode is: Take human precautions and do all in your power to protect yourselves from evil. But no protection is complete unless you seek the help and grace of God. The best of our precautions must crumble to dust when the appointed Day arrives.

2445. And so we pass on to the Last Days before the Great Summons comes from God. All human barriers will be swept away. There will be tumultuous rushes. The Trumpet will be blown, and the Judgment will be set on foot.

2446. If men had scoffed at Faith and the Hereafter, their eyes will be opened now, and they will see the terrible Reality.

2447. Those very men who refused to see the many Signs of God which in this world convey His Message and to hear the Word of the Lord when it came to them, will then see without any mistake the consequences fully brought up before them.

## SECTION 12.

102. Do the Unbelievers think  
That they can take  
My servants as protectors  
Besides Me? Verily We  
Have prepared Hell  
For the Unbelievers  
For (their) entertainment.

١٠٢- اَلْمُحْسِبِ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا اَنْ يَّتَّخِذُوْا  
عِبَادِيْ مِنْ دُوْنِيْ اَوْلِيَاءَ  
اِنَّا اَعْتَدْنَا جَهَنَّمَ لِلْكَافِرِيْنَ نُزُلًا ۝

103. Say: " Shall we tell you  
Of those who lose most  
In respect of their deeds?—<sup>2448</sup>

١٠٣- قُلْ هَلْ نُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِالْاَخْسَرِيْنَ  
اَعْمَالًا ۝

104. " Those whose efforts have  
Been wasted in this life,  
While they thought that  
They were acquiring good  
By their works?"<sup>2449</sup>

١٠٤- الَّذِيْنَ ضَلَّ سَعْيُهُمْ فِي الْحَيٰوةِ  
الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ يَحْسَبُوْنَ اَنْهُمْ يُحْسِنُوْنَ  
صُنْعًا ۝

105. They are those who deny  
The Signs of their Lord  
And the fact of their  
Having to meet Him  
(In the Hereafter): vain  
Will be their works,  
Nor shall We, on the Day  
Of Judgment, give them  
Any weight.<sup>2450</sup>

١٠٥- اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بِآيٰتِ رَبِّهِمْ  
وَلِقَآئِهِ  
فَحِطَّتْ اَعْمَالُهُمْ  
فَلَا نُعْطِيْهُمْ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ وِزْرًا ۝

106. That is their reward,  
Hell; because they rejected  
Faith, and took My Signs  
And My Messengers  
By way of jest.<sup>2451</sup>

١٠٦- ذٰلِكَ جَزَاؤُهُمْ جَهَنَّمَ بِمَا  
كَفَرُوْا وَاتَّخَذُوْا اٰيٰتِيْ وَرُسُلِيْ هُزُوًا ۝

2448. That is, those who prided themselves on their works in this life, and now find that those works are of no avail. Their loss is all the greater because they had a misplaced confidence in their own deeds or in the assistance of false "protectors". God is the only Protector; no one else's protection is of any use.

2449. Many people have such a smug sense of self-righteousness that while they go on doing wrong, they think that they are acquiring merit. So, in charity, all the elements that make for outward show or selfishness (as to get some worldly advantage) nullify the deed of charity. In the same way hypocrites sometimes affect to be surprised that their declared effort for somebody's good is not appreciated, when they are really seeking some hidden gain or false glory for themselves. The sincere are only those who believe in their spiritual responsibility and act as in God's sight.

2450. What weight can be attached to works behind which the motives are not pure, or are positively evil? They are either wasted or count against those who seek to pass them off as meritorious!

2451. False motives, pretence, deception, and hypocrisy, flourish because people do not take the higher life seriously. In effect they treat it as a jest. Signs and Messengers are sent as a special and personal Mercy from God, and for such things the first person singular is used as in this verse, even when it involves a sudden transition from the first person plural as in the last verse.

107. As to those who believe  
And work righteous deeds,  
They have, for their entertain-  
ment,  
The Gardens of Paradise,<sup>2452</sup>

١٠٧- إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ  
كَانَتْ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتُ الْفِرْدَوْسِ نُزُلًا ۖ

108. Wherein they shall dwell  
(For aye): no change  
Will they wish for from them.

١٠٨- خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا لَا يَبْغُونَ عَنْهَا  
حِوَلًا ۖ

109. Say: "If the ocean were  
Ink (wherewith to write out)  
The words of my Lord,<sup>2453</sup>  
Sooner would the ocean be  
Exhausted than would the words  
Of my Lord, even if we  
Added another ocean  
Like it, for its aid."

١٠٩- قُلْ لَوْ كَانَ الْبَحْرُ مِدَادًا  
لِكَلِمَاتِ رَبِّي لَنَفَدَ الْبَحْرُ  
قَبْلَ أَنْ تَنْفَدَ كَلِمَاتُ رَبِّي  
وَلَوْ جُمْنَا بِهَيْبَلِهِ مَدَدًا ۖ

110. Say: "I am but a man  
Like yourselves, but  
The inspiration has come  
To me, that your God is  
One God: whoever expects  
To meet his Lord, let him  
Work righteousness, and,  
In the worship of his Lord,  
Admit no one as partner.<sup>2454</sup>

١١٠- قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُكُمْ  
يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ أَنَّمَا إِلَهُكُمُ اللَّهُ  
وَاحِدٌ ۚ فَمَن كَانَ يَرْجُوا لِقَاءَ رَبِّهِ  
فَلْيَعْمَلْ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا  
وَلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ أَحَدًا ۖ



2452. *Firdaus* in Persian means an enclosed place, a park. In technical theological language the word is used for the inner circle of Heaven, or the highest Heaven, the destination of those who perfectly fulfil both requirements, viz.: a sound faith, and perfectly righteous conduct. Small faults in either respect are forgiven; the mercy of God steps in. Perhaps there is spiritual development and progress even after death.

2453. The Words and Signs and Mercies of God are in all Creation, and can never be fully set out in human language, however extended our means may be imagined to be.

2454. Righteousness and true respect for God—which excludes the worship of anything else, whether idols, or deified men, or forces of nature, or faculties of man, or Self—these are the criteria of true worship.



## APPENDIX VII.

Who was *Zul-qarnain* ?

(xviii. 83-98.)

As stated in my n. 2428 to xviii. 83, I do not consider that historical or geographical considerations have much bearing on a story treated as a Parable, as *Zul-qarnain*'s story is. Indeed all stories or narrations are referred to in the Qur-ān as Parables, for their spiritual meaning. Heated controversies or dogmatic assertions as to precise dates, personalities, or localities, seem to me to be out of place. But a great deal of literature has been piled up among our writers on the subject, and it seems desirable to set down a few notes as to the different views that have been expressed.

What is the meaning of the name or title *Zul-qarnain* — "Lord of the two *Qarns*"? "*Qarn*" may mean: (1) a horn in the literal sense, as in the case of a ram or bull; (2) a horn in a metaphorical sense, as in English, the horns of a crescent, or by a further metaphor (not used in English), the horns of a kingdom or territory, two portions at opposite ends; (3) by another metaphor, a summit, a lock of hair, typifying strength, a crest such as Eastern kings wear on their diadems; (4) referring to time, an Epoch, an Age, a Generation. Meaning (1) is inapplicable to a man or a great King: but see the next paragraph about Alexander the Great. The other three meanings may be applicable, as implying: (2) Lord of East and West, Lord of wide territory or of two kingdoms; (3) Lord of two crests on his diadem, typifying two kingdoms, or a rank superior to that of an ordinary king; (4) Lord of more than one Epoch: one whose power and influence extend far beyond his lifetime.

If we accept the popular identification of *Zul-qarnain* with Alexander, all the three latter designations would be applicable to him, as he was Lord of the West and the East, Lord of the Greek States united for the first time (Hellenic Captain-General) and of the widely-extended Persian Dominion which included all western Asia, Egypt, Central Asia, Afghanistan, and the Punjab (at least portions). He is represented on his coins with two horns on his head: he considered himself a son of Jupiter Ammon (who had the two horns of a ram), with a divine mission. He revolutionised the history of Europe, Asia, and Africa (Egypt), and his influence lasted for many generations after his death at the young age of 33. He lived from B.C. 356 to 323, but his name was one to conjure with for many centuries after him. It was not only on account of his political power, but his cultural influences. Through his conquests Greek art gave the impulse to Gandhara art in Central Asia and North-West India. The city of Alexandria which he founded in Egypt became the cultural centre, not only for Greece and Rome, but for Judaism and Christianity, and retained its supremacy till the sixth century of the Christian era. Justinian closed its schools of philosophy in 529. Its philosophic and scientific schools spread their influence over even a wider area than the Mediterranean basin.

Now the generality of the world of Islam have accepted Alexander the Great as the one meant by the epithet *Zul-qarnain*. But many of our *Ulamā* have raised doubts about it and made other suggestions. One is that it was not the *Maccedonian*

Alexander the Great, but an earlier pre-historic king contemporary with Abraham; because, they say, Zul-qarnain was a man of Faith (xviii. 88,98), while Alexander the Great was a Pagan and believed in Grecian gods. An identification with a supposed pre-historic king, about whom nothing is known, is no identification at all. On the other hand, all that is known about Alexander the Great shows that he was a man of lofty ideals. He died over three centuries before the time of Jesus, but that does not mean that he was not a man of Faith, for God revealed Himself to men of all nations in all ages. Alexander was a disciple of the philosopher Aristotle, noted for his pursuit of sound Truth in all departments of thought. Alexander's reference to Jupiter Ammon may have been no more than a playful reference to the superstitions of his time. Socrates spoke of the Grecian gods, and so did Aristotle and Plato; but it would be wrong to call them idolaters or men without Faith.

Another suggestion made is that Zul-qarnain was an ancient king of Persia. A king of Persia is referred to as a Ram with two horns in the Book of Daniel (viii. 3) in the Old Testament. But in the same Book, the Ram with the two horns was smitten, cast down to the ground, and stamped upon by a he-goat with one horn (viii. 7-8). There is nothing in our literature to suggest that Zul-qarnain came to any such ignominious end. Nor is the Book of Daniel an authority worth consideration. Its authenticity is very doubtful. There is no question that it is a patch-work, as parts of it are in the Aramaic (or Chaldee) language and parts in Hebrew, and there are in it a number of Greek words. The Septuagint version contained large additions. "Daniel"—whoever the writer or writers were—refers to historical Persian kings. If it is argued that it was some old pre-historic Persian king who built the Iron Gates (xviii. 96) to keep out the Gog and Magog tribes (xviii. 94), this is no identification at all. There is no unanimity about the identity of the Iron Wall, or the Gog and Magog tribes. Both these subjects will be referred to presently.

Another suggestion made is that it was some old prehistoric Himyarite king from Yemen, about whom nothing else is known. This, again, is no identification at all.

The question of Yājūj and Mājūj (Gog and Magog) and the iron Barrier built to keep them out is of some interest. It is practically agreed that they were the wild tribes of Central Asia which have made inroads on settled kingdoms and Empires at various stages of the world's history. The Chinese Empire suffered from their incursions and built the Great Wall of China to keep out the Manchus and Mongols. The Persian Empire suffered from them at various times and at various points. Their incursions into Europe in large hordes caused migrations and displacements of population on an enormous scale, and eventually broke up the Roman Empire. These tribes were known vaguely to the Greeks and Romans as "Scythians", but that term does not help us very much, either ethnically or geographically.

If we could locate the iron barrier or iron gates referred to in xviii. 96, we should have a closer idea of the tribes whom the barrier was meant to keep out. It is obvious that the Great Wall of China is out of the question. Begun in the third century B.C. and continued later, it covers the enormous length of 1,500 miles, and goes up the hills and down the valleys, with towers 40 feet high at intervals of 200 yards. Its average height is 20 to 30 feet. It is built of stone and earth. There is no particular

point in it which can be identified with the iron barrier in the text. No one has suggested that *Ẓul-qarnain* was a Chinese Emperor, and none of the great Conquerors of Western Asia can be credited with the building of the Chinese Wall.

The Barrier in the text must have been more in the nature of iron gates than an iron wall. Two Iron Gates, geographically far apart, have been suggested in the alternative. Sometimes they have been mixed up by writers not strong in geography. Both of them have local associations with the name of Alexander the Great. Both are near a town Derbend, and have borne the name of *Bāb-ul-ḥadīd* (Arabic for "Iron Gate"). Let us examine the case of each in turn.

The best known in modern times is at the town and seaport of Derbend in the middle of the western coast of the Caspian Sea. It is now in Soviet territory, in the district of Daghistan. Before the southern expansion of Russia in 1813 it belonged to Persia. A spur of Mount Caucasus here comes up north, close to the sea. The Wall in question is 30 miles long, with an average height of 29 feet. As *Āzarbaijān* (in Persia) is not far from this place, some writers have mixed up the Derbend Iron Gate with *Āzarbaijān*, and some with the Caucasian town of *Kharz* (Kars), which is to the south of the Caucasus. There are local traditions here, and in the Astrakhan region, at the mouth of the river Volga, higher up the Caspian, connecting this Caucasian Iron Gate with the name of Alexander, but there are good reasons why we should reject this as the site of the Iron Gate in the Qurānic story. (1) This does not correspond exactly to the description in xviii. 96 ("the space between the two steep mountain sides"); the gap is between the mountain and the sea. (2) Alexander the Great (assuming that *Ẓul-qarnain* is Alexander), is not known to have crossed the Caucasus. (3) There is an Iron Gate which corresponds exactly to the description, in a locality which we know Alexander to have visited. (4) In the early days, when Muslims spread to all parts of the world, local legends were started by ignorant people connecting the places they knew with places referred to in the Qur-ān.

We now come to the Iron Gate which corresponds exactly to the Qurānic description, and has the best claim to be connected with Alexander's story. It is near another Derbend in Central Asia, Hissar District, about 150 miles south-east of *Bukhārā*. A very narrow defile, with overhanging rocks, occurs on the main route between *Turkestan* and India: latitude 38°N; longitude 67°E. It is now called *Turki Buzhoi-Khāna* (Goat-house), but was formerly known as the Iron Gate (Arabic, *Bāb-ul-ḥadīd*; Persian, *Dar-i-āhanī*; Chinese *T'ie-men-kuan*). There is no iron gate there now, but there was one in the seventh century, when the Chinese traveller Hiouen Tsiang saw it on his journey to India. He saw two folding gates cased with iron and hung with bells. Near by is a lake named *Iskandar Kul*, connecting the locality with Alexander the Great. We know from history that Alexander, after his conquest of Persia and before his journey to India, visited *Sogdiana* (*Bukhārā*) and *Maracanda* (*Samarqand*). We also know from Muqaddasī, the Arab traveller and geographer, who wrote about A.H. 375 (A.D. 985-6) that the 'Abbāsī *Khalīfa* *Wathīq* (842-846 A.D.) sent out a mission to Central Asia to report on this Iron Gate. They found the defile 150 yards wide: on two jambs made with bricks of iron welded together with molten lead, were hung two huge gates, which were kept closed. Nothing could correspond more exactly with the description in xviii. 95-96.

If, then, the Barrier in xviii. 95-98 refers to the Iron Gate near Bukhara, we are able to proceed to a consideration of the Gog-Magog people with some confidence. They were the Mongol tribes on the other side of the Barrier, while the industrious men who did not understand Żul-qarnain's language were the Turks, with their agglutinative language, so different from the languages of Western Asia. The Barrier served its purpose for the time being. But the warning that the time must come when it must crumble to dust has also come true. It has crumbled to dust. Long since, the Mongols pushed through on their westward journey, pushing the Turks before them and the Turks became a European Power and have still a footing in Europe. We need not bother about the legends of the Gog and Magog people. They were reputed to be giants, and two tiny hills in flat Cambridgeshire are derisively called the Gog-Magog hills! Similarly the statues of Gog and Magog in the Guildhall in London, which M.M.A. takes so seriously, only remind us how legends are apt to grow and get transported to strange places.

Personally, I have not the least doubt that Żul-qarnain is meant to be Alexander the Great, the historic Alexander, and not the legendary Alexander, of whom more presently. My first appointment after graduation was that of Lecturer in Greek history. I have studied the details of Alexander's extraordinary personality in Greek historians as well as in modern writers, and have since visited most of the localities connected with his brief but brilliant career. Few readers of Quranic literature have had the same privilege of studying the details of his career. It is one of the wonders of the Qur-ān, that, spoken through an Ummi's mouth, it should contain so many incidental details which are absolutely true. The more our knowledge increases, the more we feel this. There are little touches which need not have been mentioned. They come in incidentally like the incidental remarks of a person full of knowledge, who does not intend to put forward those points but whose fulness of knowledge brings them in inevitably.

One such point occurs in the mention of Alexander's westward journey (xviii. 86). He saw the sun set in a piece of murky water which is described as a "Spring". Most Commentators have understood the "spring" to be the sea, and the "murky water" to be its dark-blue water. Nizāmī, in his *Romance of Alexander*, takes Alexander right west along North Africa to Andalusia and the Atlantic Ocean. There is no historic proof that Alexander ever reached the Atlantic. But he was of course familiar with the deep-blue waters of the Mediterranean. The Mediterranean interpretation may pass if we had not a closer explanation. Alexander's first exploits were when he was a mere boy, in the reign of his father Philip. The region of Illyricum was due west of Macedonia, and Macedonia's first expansion was in that direction. The town of Lychnis was annexed to Macedonia and thus the western frontier of Macedonia was secured. The northern frontier towards the Danube had already been secured, and the lesson he subsequently gave to Thebes secured him against attack from the Greek States to the south, and prepared the way for his great march east against the Persian Empire. To the west of the town of Lychnis is a lake 170 square miles in area, fed by underground springs that issue through limestone rocks and give out murky water. Both town and lake are now called Ochrida, about 50 miles west of Monastir. The water is so dark that the river which forms the outlet of the lake to the north is called the Black Drin. Looking at the sunset from the town, the observer would see the sun set in a pool of murky water (xviii. 86). It was a question

before the boy Alexander—the dreamy, impulsive, fearless rider—whether he would put the barbarous Illyricans to the sword or show them mercy. He showed true discrimination and statesmanship. He punished the guilty but showed kindness to the innocent, and thus consolidated his power in the west. This I construe to be the meaning of xviii. 86-87; otherwise these verses do not seem to be perfectly clear.

Another point may be noted. The three episodes mentioned are the journey to the west, the journey to the east, and the journey to the Iron Gate. The journey to the west I have just explained. The journey to the east was to the Persian Empire. Here he found a people who lived in the open and wore little clothing. This might apply to people who live in an inland place in the latitude of Persepolis or Multan. He left them alone as they were (xviii. 91). He was not warring against populations: he was warring against the proud but effete Persian Empire. He left them as they were with their local institutions, and under their local chiefs. In feeling he treated them as his own, not as aliens. In some things he himself adopted their ways. His followers misunderstood him. But God understood, for He approves of all things that lead to Unity among mankind.

The direction of the third journey is not mentioned. The Commentators suggest the north, but they might with better reason have suggested the south, as Alexander visited Egypt. But the visit to the Iron Gate was to the East—a continuation of his journey east. That is why the direction is not mentioned again. Here his mission was different. He had to protect a peaceful industrious population, whom perhaps the Persian Empire had failed to protect, against turbulent and restless invaders. He helped them to protect themselves, but warned them that all human precautions, though good and necessary, are vain without God's help.

Each of the episodes mentioned is historical. But the pomp and glitter of military conquest are not mentioned. On the contrary spiritual motives are revealed and commended. We need not know or learn any history or geography or science or psychology or ethics to understand them. But the more real knowledge we have, the more completely we shall understand them and the lessons to be drawn from them. The earthly journeys are treated as mere symbols to show us the evolution of a great and noble soul which achieved so much in a short earthly life.

His career was so extraordinary that it impressed his contemporaries as a world-event, as it undoubtedly was,—one of the greatest world-events in history. Legends began to grow up round his name. In many cases the legends overlaid the history. To-day the world is thrilled by Sir Aurel Stein's identification of Aornos, a very small geographical detail in a great career full of lessons, in political, ethical, and religious wisdom. But the generations immediately following Alexander's period wrote and transmitted all sorts of wonderful legends that passed current in East and West. The philosopher Kallisthenes had been with Alexander in Asia. Under his name was produced a Greek book in Alexandria some time before the second century of the Christian era. It was translated into Latin in the third century. Translations were subsequently made into most of the European languages. In Chaucer's time (1340-1400) these Alexander legends were known to every "wight that hath discrecion" (*The Monk in Canterbury Tales*).

Alexandria was a focus of Christian and Jewish learning for some centuries. The Christians also made Alexander a saint. The Jews carried the Alexander cycle into the East. Our Persian poet Jāmi (A. H. 535-599, A. D. 1141-1203) worked it up into his epic the *Iskandar-nāma*. He is careful to show the historical or semi-historical and the ethical parts separately. The one relates to action or exploits (*iqbāl*) and the other to wisdom (*Khiraḍ*). He had the advantage of the Qur-ān story before him. That story mentions three historical episodes incidentally, but draws our attention to matters of the weightiest spiritual significance, and that is the chief thing to note in the story.

INTRODUCTION TO SŪRA XIX (*Maryam*).

The spiritual growth of man as an individual soul having been explained in S. xvii. as beginning with the first principles of moral conduct and in S. xviii as being dependent upon our realisation of the brevity and mystery of this life and the true use of power as in the story of Ẓul-qarnain, we now pass on to the story of individual Messengers of God in their personal relations with their environment,—Yahyā with his father Zakariya, Jesus with his mother Mary, Abraham with his unbelieving father, Moses with his brother Aaron, Ismā'il with his family, and Idrīs in the high station to which he was called. Seeing how these great ones fitted into the scheme of life, man is condemned for his want of faith, or for degrading his faith to superstition, and warned of the Hereafter.

In chronology, it was revealed before the first resort of the batch of Muslims to Abyssinia, say seven years before the Hijrat.

*Summary*

Zakariya was anxious to have an heir to carry on God's work in a world of unrighteousness, and Yahyā was given to him (xix. 1-15, and C. 138).

Mary the mother of Jesus was maligned by her people, but Jesus comforted her and was good to her (xix. 16-40, and C. 139.)

Abraham was persecuted for his Faith by his people, including his unbelieving father, but he withdrew from them, and was blessed; Moses was helped by his brother Aaron; Ismā'il brought up his family in piety; and Idrīs was truthful and pious in a high station: they showed the way; yet men will not learn the good life (xix. 41-65, and C. 140).

Man should not disbelieve in the Hereafter, nor sully his faith by false notions about God (xix. 66-98, and C. 141).

C. 138.—Men of God show their qualities  
(xix. 1-15.) In their private relationships as much  
As in their public ministry. Zakariya  
Was anxious, in a world of unrighteousness,  
To find a successor to continue his godly  
Errand. He was given a son, Yahyā,  
Who heralded Jesus, and lived a life  
Of wisdom, gentle love, and purity.

## Sūra XIX.

Maryam, or Mary.

In the name of God, Most Gracious,  
Most Merciful.

1. **Kaf. Ha. Ya. 'Ain. Šad.**<sup>2455</sup>

2. (This is) a recital<sup>2456</sup>  
Of Mercy of thy Lord  
To His servant Zakariya.

3. Behold! he cried  
To his Lord in secret,<sup>2457</sup>

4. Praying: "O my Lord!  
Infirm indeed are my bones,  
And the hair of my head  
Doth glisten with grey:  
But never am I unblest,  
O my Lord, in my prayer"<sup>2458</sup>  
To Thee!



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

١- كَهْ يَعْصَ ۝

٢- ذِكْرُ رَحْمَتِ رَبِّكَ عَبْدُكَ ذِكْرُ يَٰٓا ۝

٣- اِذْ نَادَىٰ رَبَّهُ نِدَاءً خَفِيًّا ۝

٤- قَالَ رَبِّ اِنِّیْ وَهْنَ الْعِظْمِ مَرِيٌّ  
وَاسْتَعْلَ الرَّاسُ شَيْبًا  
وَلَمْ اَكُنْ بِدُعَاؤِكَ رَبِّ شَقِيًّا ۝

2455. This is the only Sūra which begins with these five Abbreviated Letters, K., H., Y., 'A., Š. For Abbreviated Letters generally, see Appendix I, printed after Sūra II.

As stated in my note 25, such Letters are Symbols, of which the true meaning is known to God alone. We should not be dogmatic about any conjectures that we make. According to the interpretation of the last letter Šād, suggested in n. 989 to vit. I, I should be disposed to accept šād with the meaning of *Qiṣaṣ*, i.e., stories of the Prophets. The main figures referred to here are: Zakariya, Yaḥyā, Maryam, 'Isā, and Ibrāhīm: the others are mentioned but incidentally. The strong letter in Zakariya is K; in Ibrāhīm, H; in Yāḥyā and perhaps MarYam, Y; and in 'Isa,—'A (ʾIṣn). H also comes in Hārūn (Aaron), and the Arabic Yā comes in all the names including Ismāʿil and Idris.

I offer this suggestion with some diffidence. The suggestion of the *Taḥsīn Kabīr* is that the letters stand for attributes of God: K, for *Kāfī* (the One sufficient in Himself); H, for *Hādī* (He who guides); Y, for *Yad* (Hand as a symbol of Power or Authority; Cf. xlviii 10, "The Hand of God is above their hands"); 'A, for *'Alīm* (the All-Knowing); and Š, for *Šādiq* (the True One).

2456. The Mercy of God to Zakariya was shown in many ways: (1) in the acceptance of his prayer; (2) in bestowing a son like Yaḥyā; and (3) in the love between father and son, in addition to the work which Yaḥyā did as God's Messenger for the world. Cf. iii. 38-41 and notes. There the public ministry was the point stressed; here the beautiful relations between the son and the father.

2457. *In secret*: because he feared that his own family and relatives were going wrong (xix. 5), and he wanted to keep the lamp of God burning bright. He could not very well mention the fear about his colleagues (who were his relations) in public.

2458. This preface shows the fervent faith of Zakariya. Zakariya was a priest of the Most High God. His office was in the Temple, and his relatives were his colleagues. But he found in them no true spirit of the service of God and man. He was filled with anxiety as to who would uphold the godly ideas he had in mind, which were strange to his worldly colleagues.



5. "Now I fear (what)  
My relatives (and colleagues)  
(Will do) after me:  
But my wife is barren:  
So give me an heir<sup>2459</sup>  
As from Thyself,—

هـ وَإِنِّي خِفْتُ الْمَوَالِيَ مِنْ وَرَائِي  
وَكَانَتْ امْرَأَتِي عَاقِرًا  
فَهَبْ لِي مِنْ لَدُنْكَ وَلِيًّا ٥

6. " (One that) will (truly)  
Represent me, and represent<sup>2460</sup>  
The posterity of Jacob;  
And make him, O my Lord!  
One with whom Thou art  
Well-pleased! "

٦ يَرْثُنِي وَيَرِثْ  
مِنْ آلِ يَعْقُوبَ ٦  
وَأَجْعَلْهُ رَبِّ رَضِيًّا ٥

7. (His prayer was answered):  
"O Zakariya! We give thee  
Good news of a son:  
His name shall be Yahya:  
On none by that name  
Have We conferred distinction  
before."<sup>2461</sup>

هـ يَذْكُرْنَا أَكُنَّا نَبَشِّرُكَ  
بِعِلْمٍ اسْمُهُ يَحْيَىٰ  
لَمْ نَجْعَلْ لَهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ سَمِيًّا ٥

8. He said: "O my Lord!  
How shall I have a son,  
When my wife is barren  
And I am quite decrepit  
From old age?"

هـ قَالَ رَبِّ أَنَّى يَكُونُ لِي غُلَامٌ  
وَكَانَتْ امْرَأَتِي عَاقِرًا  
وَقَدْ بَلَغْتُ مِنَ الْكِبَرِ عِتِيًّا ٥

2459. His was not merely a vulgar desire for a son. If it had been, he would have prayed much earlier in his life, when he was a young man. He was too full of true piety to put merely selfish things into his prayers. But here was a public need, in the service of the Lord. He was too old, but could he perhaps adopt a child—who would be an heir "as from God" (See n. 380 to iii. 38).

2460. It is true that an heir inherits property, but his higher duty is to represent in everything the personality of him from whom he inherits. It is doubtful whether Zakariya had any worldly property. But he had character and virtue, as a man of God, and this he wanted to transmit to his heir as his most precious possession. It was almost the most precious possession of the posterity of Jacob. The people around him had fallen away from God's Message. Could his heir, like him, try and renew it?

2461. This was John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus. In accordance with his father's prayer, he, and Jesus for whom he prepared the way, renewed the Message of God, which had been corrupted and lost among the Israelites. The Arabic form Yahya suggests "Life". The Hebrew form is Johanan, which means "Jehovah has been Gracious". Cf. Hananan in verse 13 below. It does not mean that the name was given for the first time, for we read of a Johanan the son of Careah in II Kings, xxv. 23, an otherwise obscure man. It means that God had, for the first time, called one of His elect by that name.

9. He said: "So (it will be):<sup>2462</sup>  
Thy Lord saith, 'That is  
Easy for Me: I did  
Indeed create thee before,  
When thou hadst been nothing!'"<sup>2463</sup>

٩- قَالَ كَذَلِكَ ۚ قَالَ رَبُّكَ  
هُوَ عَلَيَّ هَيِّئْ ۚ وَقَدْ خَلَقْتَنِي مِنْ قَبْلُ  
وَلَمْ تَكُنْ شَيْئًا ۝

10. (Zakariya) said: "O my Lord!  
Give me a Sign."<sup>2464</sup>  
"Thy Sign", was the answer,  
"Shall be that thou  
Shalt speak to no man  
For three nights."<sup>2465</sup>  
Although thou art not dumb."

١٠- قَالَ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ لِي آيَةً  
قَالَ آيَتُكَ  
أَلَّا تُكَلِّمَ النَّاسَ ثَلَاثَ لَيَالٍ سَوِيًّا ۝

11. So Zakariya came out  
To his people  
From his chamber:  
He told them by signs  
To celebrate God's praises  
In the morning  
And in the evening.

١١- فَخَرَّجَ عَلَى قَوْمِهِ مِنَ الْبَحْرَابِ  
فَأَوْصَى إِلَيْهِمْ أَنْ سَبِّحُوا  
بُكْرَةً وَعَشِيًّا ۝

12. (To his son came the  
command):<sup>2466</sup>  
"O Yahya! take hold

١٢- يَحْيَىٰ خُذِ الْكِتَابَ بِقُوَّةٍ ۚ

2462. Who is the "He" in this clause? As I have construed it, following the majority of Commentators, it means the angel who brought the message from God. Cf. xix, 21 below. But some Commentators construe it to refer to Zakariya. In that case the meaning will be: Zakariya after a little reflection said (in his wonder) "So!", i.e., "Can it really be so? Can I really have a son in my old age?" The speech following, "Thy Lord saith," etc., will then be that of the angel-messenger.

2463. Every man was nothing just before he was created, i.e., his personality was called into being by God. Even if there are material processes in forming the body, in accordance with the laws of nature, the real creative force is in God. But here there is a subtler meaning. John was the harbinger of Jesus, preparing the way for him; and this sentence also prepares us for the more wonderful birth of Jesus himself: see verse 21 below. Everything is possible with God.

2464. The "Sign", I understand, was not in order to convince Zakariya that the Lord's promise was true, for he had faith; but it was a symbol by which he was to show in his conduct that he was to conform to his new destiny as the father of Yahya who was to come. Yahya was to take up the work, and Zakariya was to be silent, although the latter was sound in body and there was nothing to prevent him from speaking.

2465. Compare this verse with iii. 41. The variations are interesting. Here it is "for three nights": there it is "for three days". The meaning is the same, for a day is a period of 24 hours. But the point of view is different in each case. There it was from the point of view of the Ummat or Congregation, among whom he worked by day; here the point of view is that of his individual soul, which spent the nights in prayer and praise. Notice again that at the end of the next verse, we have here "In the morning and in the evening", and at the end of iii. 41, "In the evening and in the morning"—showing again that the point of view is reversed.

2466. Time passes. The son is born. In this section of the Sura the centre of interest is Yahya, and the instruction is now given to him. 'Keep fast hold of God's revelation with all your might': for an unbelieving world had either corrupted or neglected it, and Yahya (John the Baptist) was to prepare the way for Jesus, who was coming to renew and re-interpret it.

Of the Book with might" :  
And We gave him Wisdom <sup>2467</sup>  
Even as a youth,

13. And pity (for all creatures)  
As from us, and purity : <sup>2468</sup>  
He was devout,

14. And kind to his parents,  
And he was not overbearing  
Or rebellious.

15. So Peace on him  
The day he was born,  
The day that he dies,  
And the day that he  
Will be raised up  
To life (again) ! <sup>2469</sup>

وَآتَيْنَاهُ الْكِتَابَ صَبِيًّا ۝

۱۳- وَحَنَانًا مِّن لَّدُنَّا وَزَكَاةً  
وَكَانَ تَقِيًّا ۝

۱۴- وَوَدُّدًا بِوَالِدَيْهِ  
وَلَمْ يَكُنْ جَبَّارًا عَصِيًّا ۝

۱۵- وَسَلَامٌ عَلَيْهِ يَوْمَ وُلِدَ  
وَيَوْمَ يَمُوتُ  
وَيَوْمَ يُبْعَثُ حَيًّا ۝

C. 139.—Next comes the story of Jesus and his mother  
(xix. 16-40.) Mary. She gave birth, as a virgin, to Jesus,  
But her people slandered and abused her  
As a disgrace to her lineage. Her son  
Did defend her and was kind to her. He  
Was a servant of God, a true Prophet,  
Blessed in the gifts of Prayer and Charity,  
But no more than a man : to call him  
The son of God is to derogate from God's  
Majesty, for God is High above all  
His Creatures, the Judge of the Last Day.

2467. *Ḥukm*, translated Wisdom, implies something more than Wisdom; it is the Wisdom or Judgment that is entitled to judge and command, as in the matter of denouncing sin.

2468. John the Baptist did not live long. He was imprisoned by Herod, the tetrarch (provincial ruler under the Roman Empire), whom he had reproved for his sins, and eventually beheaded at the instigation of the woman with whom Herod was infatuated. But even in his young life, he was granted (1) wisdom by God, for he boldly denounced sin; (2) gentle pity and love for all God's creatures, for he moved among the humble and lowly, and despised "soft raiment"; and (3) purity of life, for he renounced the world and lived in the wilderness. All his work he did in his youth. These things showed themselves in his conduct, for he was devout, showing love to God and to God's creatures, and more particularly to his parents (for we are considering that aspect of his life): this was also shown by the fact that he never used violence, from an attitude of arrogance, nor entertained a spirit of rebellion against human or divine Law.

2469. This is spoken as in the lifetime of Yahya. Peace and God's Blessings were on him when he was born; they continue when he is about to die an unjust death at the hands of a tyrant; and they will be specially manifest at the Day of Judgment.

## SECTION 2.

16. **R**elate in the Book  
(The story of) Mary,<sup>2470</sup>  
When she withdrew  
From her family  
To a place in the East.<sup>2471</sup>
17. She placed a screen  
(To screen herself) from them ;  
Then We sent to her  
Our angel, and he appeared  
Before her as a man  
In all respects.
18. She said: " I seek refuge  
From thee to (God)  
Most Gracious : (come not near)  
If thou dost fear God."
19. He said: " Nay, I am only  
A messenger from thy Lord,  
(To announce) to thee  
The gift of a holy son."<sup>2472</sup>
20. She said: " How shall I  
Have a son, seeing that  
No man has touched me,  
And I am not unchaste ? "
21. He said: " So (it will be) :  
Thy Lord saith, " That is  
Easy for Me : and (We  
Wish) to appoint him  
As a Sign unto men  
And a Mercy from Us " :<sup>2473</sup>

١٦- وَاذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ مَرْيَمَ  
إِذْ اتَّخَذَتْ مِنْ أَهْلِهَا مَكَانًا شَرْقِيًّا ۝

١٧- فَأَتَتْهُمُ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِهَا بَابًا  
فَارْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهَا رُوحَنَا  
فَتَمَثَّلَ لَهَا بَشَرًا سَوِيًّا ۝

١٨- قَالَتْ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ  
بِالرَّحْمَنِ مِنْكَ إِنْ كُنْتَ تَقِيًّا ۝

١٩- قَالَ إِنَّمَا أَنَا رَسُولُ رَبِّكِ  
لِيَهَبَ لَكِ غُلَامًا زَكِيًّا ۝

٢٠- قَالَتْ أَنَّى يَكُونُ لِي غُلَامٌ  
وَلَمْ يَمَسِّنِي بَشَرٌ وَلَمْ أَكُ بَغِيًّا ۝

٢١- قَالَ كَذَلِكَ قَالَ رَبُّكَ  
هُوَ عَلَى هَيْئٍ وَلَيَجْعَلُهُ  
آيَةً لِلنَّاسِ وَرَحْمَةً مِنَّا ۝

2470. Cf. the story of Mary as related in iii. 42-51. Here the whole theme is different: it is the personal side of the spiritual experiences of the worshippers of God in relation to their families or environment.

2471. To a private eastern chamber, perhaps in the Temple. She went into privacy, from her people and from people in general, for prayer and devotion. It was in this state of purity that the angel appeared to her in the shape of a man. She thought it was a man. She was frightened, and she adjured him not to invade her privacy.

2472. God had destined her to be the mother of the holy Prophet Jesus Christ, and now had come the time when this should be announced to her.

2473. The mission of Jesus is announced in two ways: (1) he was to be a Sign to men; his wonderful birth and wonderful life were to turn an ungodly world back to God; and (2) his mission was to bring solace and salvation to the repentant. *This, in some way or other, is the case with all apostles of God, and it was pre-eminently so in the case of the holy Apostle Muhammad. But the point here is that the Israelites, to whom Jesus was sent, were a hardened race, for whom the message of Jesus was truly a gospel of Mercy.*

It is a matter  
(So) decreed.<sup>2474</sup>

22. So she conceived him,  
And she retired with him  
To a remote place.<sup>2475</sup>

23. And the pains of childbirth  
Drove her to the trunk  
Of a palm-tree:  
She cried (in her anguish):  
"Ah! would that I had  
Died before this! would that  
I had been a thing  
Forgotten and out of sight!"<sup>2476</sup>

24. But (a voice) cried to her  
From beneath the (palm-tree):  
"Grieve not! for thy Lord  
Hath provided a rivulet  
Beneath thee;

25. "And shake towards thyself  
The trunk of the palm-tree:  
It will let fall  
Fresh ripe dates upon thee."<sup>2477</sup>

26. "So eat and drink  
And cool (thine) eye.<sup>2478</sup>  
And if thou dost see  
Any man, say, 'I have

وَكَانَ أَمْرًا مَقْضِيًّا ٥

٢٢- فَحَمَلَتْهُ فَانْتَبَدَتْ بِهِ مَكَانًا قَرِيبًا ٥

٢٣- فَاجَاءَهَا النَّحَاضُ  
إِلَى جَذْعِ النَّخْلَةِ ٥  
قَالَتْ يَلَيْتَنِي مِتُّ قَبْلَ هَذَا  
وَكُنْتُ نَسِيًّا مَنْسِيًّا ٥

٢٤- فَنَادَاهَا مِنْ تَحْتِهَا  
إِلَّا تَخْزِينِ قَدْ جَعَلَ رَبُّكَ تَحْتِكَ سَرِيًّا ٥

٢٥- وَهَرَبَ إِلَى يَدِ النَّخْلِ  
تَسْقُطُ عَلَيْكَ رَطْبًا جَنِيًّا ٥

٢٦- فَكُلْ وَالشَّرِبْ وَتَرَيَّ عَيْنًا قَامَاتٍ  
مِنَ الْبَشَرِ أَحَدًا فَقُولِي إِنِّي

2474. For anything that God wishes to create, He says "Be", and it is (Cf. iii. 47). There is no interval between His decree and its accomplishment, except such as He imposes by His decree. Time may be only a projection of our own minds in this world of relativity.

2475. The annunciation and the conception, we may suppose, took place in Nazareth (of Galilee), say 65 miles north of Jerusalem. The delivery took place in Bethlehem about 6 miles south of Jerusalem. It was a remote place, not only with reference to the distance of 71 miles, but because in Bethlehem itself the birth was in an obscure corner under a palm tree, from which perhaps the babe was afterwards removed to a manger in a stable.

2476. She was but human, and suffered the pangs of an expectant mother, with no one to attend on her. The circumstances being peculiar, she had got far away from her people.

2477. Unseen Providence had seen that she should not suffer from thirst or from hunger. The rivulet provided her with water also for ablutions.

2478. *Cool thine eye*: An idiom for "comfort thyself and be glad". The literal meaning should not, however, be lost sight of. She was to cool her eyes (perhaps full of tears) with the fresh water of the rivulet and take comfort that a remarkable babe had been born to her. She was also to look round, and if any one came near, she was to decline all conversation.

Vowed a fast to (God)  
Most Gracious, and this day  
Will I enter into no talk  
With any human being'.<sup>2479</sup>

27. ~~At~~ length she brought  
The (babe) to her people,  
Carrying him (in her arms).  
They said: "O Mary!  
Truly an amazing thing  
Hast thou brought!"<sup>2480</sup>

28. "O sister of Aaron!"<sup>2481</sup>  
Thy father was not  
A man of evil, nor thy  
Mother a woman unchaste!"

29. But she pointed to the babe.<sup>2482</sup>  
They said: "How can we  
Talk to one who is  
A child in the cradle?"

30. He said: "I am indeed  
A servant of God:  
He hath given me  
Revelation and made me  
A prophet;

31. "And He hath made me  
Blessed wheresoever I be,

نَذَرْتُ لِلرَّحْمَنِ صَوْمًا  
فَلَنْ أَكَلِمَةَ الْيَوْمِ إِنْسِيًّا ۝

٢٧- فَأَتَتْ بِهِ قَوْمَهَا  
تَحْمِيلًا  
قَالُوا لَيْسَ لَكُم لَقَدْ جِئْتِ شَيْئًا فَرِيًّا ۝

٢٨- يَا خُتَّةُ هَؤُلَاءِ مَا كَانَ آبُوكِ  
أَفْرًا سَوِيًّا وَمَا كَانَتْ أُمُّكَ بَغِيًّا ۝

٢٩- فَأَشَارَتْ إِلَيْهِ قَالُوا كَيْفَ  
نُكَلِّمُ مَنْ كَانَ فِي الْمَهْدِ صَبِيًّا ۝

٣٠- قَالَ إِنِّي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ  
أَتَدْنِي الرِّكْبَ وَجَعَلَنِي نَبِيًّا ۝

٣١- وَجَعَلَنِي مُبَارَكًا أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُ

2479. She was to decline all conversation with man or woman, on the plea of a vow to God. The "fast" here does not mean abstinence literally from eating and drinking. She has just been advised to eat the dates and drink of the stream. It means abstinence from the ordinary household meals, and indeed from human intercourse generally.

2480. The amazement of the people knew no bounds. In any case they were ready to think the worst of her, as she had disappeared from her kin for some time. But now she comes, shamelessly parading a babe in her arms! How she had disgraced the house of Aaron, the fountain of priesthood! We may suppose that the scene took place in the Temple in Jerusalem, or in Nazareth.

2481. Aaron the brother of Moses was the first in the line of Israelite priesthood. Mary and her cousin Elisabeth (mother of Yahyā) came of a priestly family, and were therefore "sisters of Aaron" or daughters of Imrān (who was Aaron's father). See n. 375 to iii. 35. Mary is reminded of her high lineage and the unexceptionable morals of her father and mother. How, they said, she had fallen, and disgraced the name of her progenitors!

2482. What could Mary do? How could she explain? Would they, in their censorious mood, accept her explanation? All she could do was to point to the child, who, she knew, was no ordinary child. And the child came to her rescue. By a miracle he spoke, defended his mother, and preached—to an unbelieving audience. See iii. 46, and n. 388.

And hath enjoined on me  
Prayer and Charity as long  
As I live; <sup>2483</sup>

32. "(He) hath made me kind  
To my mother, and not  
-Overbearing and unhappy; <sup>2484</sup>

33. "So Peace is on me  
The day I was born,  
The day that I die,  
And the day that I  
Shall be raised up  
To life (again)!" <sup>2485</sup>

34. Such (was) Jesus the son  
Of Mary: (it is) a statement  
Of truth, about which  
They (vainly) dispute. <sup>2486</sup>

35. It is not befitting  
To (the majesty of) God  
That He should beget  
A son. Glory be to Him!  
When He determines  
A matter, He only says  
To it, "Be", and it is. <sup>2487</sup>

36. Verily God is my Lord  
And your Lord: Him

وَأَوْصَانِي بِالصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ مَا  
دُمْتُ حَيًّا ۖ

ۛۛۛ بَوَالِدَتِي وَلَمْ يَجْعَلْنِي جَبَّارًا  
شَقِيًّا ۝

ۛۛۛ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَيَّ يَوْمَ وُلِدْتُ  
وَيَوْمَ أَمُوتُ  
وَيَوْمَ أُبْعَثُ حَيًّا ۝

ۛۛۛ ذَٰلِكَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ  
قَوْلَ الْحَقِّ الَّذِي فِيهِ يَمْتَرُونَ ۝

ۛۛۛ مَا كَانَ لِلَّهِ أَنْ يَتَّخِذَ مِنْ وَلَدٍ ۚ  
سُبْحَنَهُ ۚ إِذَا قَضَىٰ أَمْرًا  
فَأَمَّا يَقُولُ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ ۝

ۛۛۛ وَلَإِنَّ اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبُّكُمْ

2483. There is a parallelism throughout the accounts of Jesus and Yahyā, with some variations. Both the parallelisms and the variations are interesting. For instance Jesus declares at the very outset that he is a servant of God, thus negating the false notion that he was God or the son of God. The greatness of Yahyā is described in xix. 12-13 in terms that are not applied to Jesus, but the verses xix. 14-15 as applied to Yahyā are in almost identical terms with those applied to Jesus here (xix. 32-33). Devotion in Prayer and Charity is a good description of the Church of Christ at its best, and pity, purity, and devotion in Yahyā are a good description of the ways leading to Prayer and Charity, just as John led to Jesus.

2484. Overbearing violence is not only unjust and harmful to those on whom it is practised; it is perhaps even more harmful to the person who practises it, for his soul becomes turbid, unsettled, and ultimately unhappy and wretched,—the state of those in Hell. Here the negative qualities are "not overbearing or miserable." As applied to John they were "not overbearing or rebellious." John bore his punishment from the State without any protest or drawing back.

2485. Cf. xix. 15, and n. 2464. Christ was not crucified (iv. 157). But those who believe that he never died should ponder over this verse.

2486. The disputations about the nature of Jesus Christ were vain, but also persistent and sanguinary. The modern Christian churches have thrown them into the background, but they would do well to abandon irrational dogmas altogether.

2487. Begetting a son is a physical act depending on the needs of men's animal nature. God Most High is independent of all needs, and it is derogatory to Him to attribute such an act to Him. It is merely a relic of pagan and anthropomorphic superstitions.

Therefore serve ye : this is  
A Way that is straight.<sup>2488</sup>

37. But the sects differ  
Among themselves : and woe  
To the Unbelievers because  
Of the (coming) Judgment<sup>2489</sup>  
Of a momentous Day !

38. How plainly will they see  
And hear, the Day that  
They will appear before Us !  
But the unjust to-day  
Are in error manifest!<sup>2490</sup>

39. But warn them of the Day  
Of Distress,<sup>2491</sup> when  
The matter will be determined :  
For (behold,) they are negligent  
And they do not believe !

40. It is We Who will inherit<sup>2492</sup>  
The earth, and all beings  
Thereon : to Us will they  
All be returned.

فَاعْبُدُوهُ هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ

۳۷- فَأَخْتَلَفَ الْأَحْزَابُ مِنْ بَيْنِهِمْ  
قَوْلًا لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ مَشْهَدِ  
يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ

۳۸- أَسْمِعْ بِهِمْ وَأَبْصِرْ يَوْمَ  
يَأْتُونَنَا لَكِنِ الظَّالِمُونَ الْيَوْمَ فِي  
ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ

۳۹- وَأَنْذِرْهُمْ يَوْمَ الْحَسْرَةِ إِذْ  
فُصِّي الْأَمْرُ وَهُمْ فِي غَفْلَةٍ وَهُمْ لَا  
يُؤْمِنُونَ

۴۰- إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَرِثُ الْأَرْضَ وَمَنْ عَلَيْهَا  
وَالَّذِينَ يُزْجَعُونَ

C. 140.—Abraham pleaded with loving earnestness  
(xix. 41-65.) With his father to accept the truth of God :

He was turned out, but he retained  
His gentleness and was blessed. Moses  
Asked for the aid of his brother Aaron  
And was true to his people. Ismā'il  
Was loyal to his father and his God, and was  
A willing and accepted sacrifice to God.

2488. As opposed to the crooked superstitions which take refuge in all sorts of metaphysical sophistries to prove three in one and one in three. In the Qur-ān there is no crookedness (xviii. 1). Christ's teaching was simple, like his life, but the Christians have made it crooked.

2489. *Judgment* : the word in the original is *Mash-had*, which implies many things : (1) the time or place where evidence is taken, as in a Court of Judgment ; (2) the time or place where people are produced (to be judged) ; and (3) the occasion for such production for the taking of evidence. A very expressive phrase for the Day of Judgment.

2490. Cf. l. 22, and that whole passage, where the Resurrection is described.

2491. *Hasrat* : Sighs, sighing, regrets.

2492. Cf. iii. 180, n. 485 ; xv. 23, n. 1964. Material property passes from one to another : when one dies, another inherits it. God gives life and death, and all that survives after physical death goes back to God, the original source of all things.



Idris in his highest station held fast  
To truth and integrity. Thus are the righteous  
Shown true in their personal environment,  
And inherit the Bliss in which the salutation  
Is Peace—perfect Peace, the reward of the Constant.

## SECTION 3.

41. (Also) mention in the Book  
(The story of) Abraham :  
He was a man of Truth,  
A prophet.

٣١- وَادْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ  
إِنَّهُ كَانَ صِدِّيقًا نَبِيًّا ○

42. Behold, he said to his father :<sup>2493</sup>  
"O my father ! why  
Worship that which heareth not  
And seeth not, and can  
Profit thee nothing ?

٣٢- إِذْ قَالَ لِأَبِيهِ يَا أَبَتِ لِمَ  
تَعْبُدُ مَا لَا يَسْمَعُ وَلَا يُبْصِرُ  
وَلَا يُغْنِي عَنْكَ شَيْئًا ○

43. "O my father ! to me  
Hath come knowledge which  
Hath not reached thee :<sup>2494</sup>  
So follow me : I will guide  
Thee to a Way that  
Is even and straight."<sup>2495</sup>

٣٣- يَا أَبَتِ إِنِّي قَدْ جَاءَنِي مِنَ الْعِلْمِ مَا  
لَمْ يَأْتِكَ فَاتَّبِعْنِي أَهْدِكَ  
صِرَاطًا سَوِيًّا ○

44. "O my father ! serve not  
Satan : for Satan is  
A rebel against (God)  
Most Gracious."<sup>2496</sup>

٣٤- يَا أَبَتِ لَا تَعْبُدِ الشَّيْطَانَ  
إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ كَانَ لِلرَّحْمَنِ عَصِيًّا ○

45. "O my father ! I fear  
Lest a Penalty afflict thee<sup>2497</sup>  
From (God) Most Gracious,  
So that thou become  
To Satan a friend."

٣٥- يَا أَبَتِ إِنِّي أَخَافُ أَنْ يُمَسِّكَ عَذَابٌ  
مِّنَ الرَّحْمَنِ فَتَكُونَ لِلشَّيْطَانِ وَلِيًّا ○

2493. The reference to Abraham here is in relation to his tender solicitude for his father, who had not received the light of Unity, and to whom Abraham wanted to be a guide and friend.

2494. Some are more receptive of Light than others. It is their duty and privilege to guide and point to the right Way.

2495. *Sawfyan*—right, smooth, even ; complete, perfect ; hence the derived meanings : in xix. 10, 'in full possession of all the physical senses' ; in that context, 'not dumb' : in xix. 17, when the angel appears in the form of a man, 'completely like' a man, a man 'in all respects.'

2496. The rebellion is all the more heinous and inexcusable, considering that God is Most Just, Most Merciful, Most Gracious.

2497. To entertain a feeling of friendliness, instead of aversion, to Evil, is in itself a degradation of our nature, a Penalty which God imposes on our deliberate rejection of the Truth. And the friendliness to Evil also implies the sharing of the outlawry of Evil.

46. (The father) replied: "Dost thou  
Hate my gods, O Abraham?  
If thou forbear not, I will  
Indeed stone thee:  
Now get away from me  
For a good long while!" <sup>2498</sup>

٢٦- قَالَ أَرَأَيْتَ أَنْتَ عَنْ إِلَهِي  
يَا بُرْهَيْمُ لَنْ لَمْ تَنْتَهُ لَكَ رَجْمُنَا  
وَأَهْجُرُنِي بَلِيًّا ۝

47. Abraham said: "Peace be  
On thee: I will pray  
To my Lord for thy  
forgiveness." <sup>2499</sup>  
For He is to me  
Most Gracious.

٢٧- قَالَ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكَ  
سَأَسْتَغْفِرُكَ رَبِّي  
إِنَّهُ كَانَ بِي حَفِيًّا ۝

48. "And I will turn away  
From ye (all) and from those  
Whom ye invoke besides God:  
I will call on my Lord:  
Perhaps, by my prayer,  
I shall be not unblest." <sup>2500</sup>

٢٨- وَأَعِزِّ لَكُمْ وَمَا تَدْعُونَ  
مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَادْعُوا رَبِّي  
عَسَىٰ آلَا أَكُونُ بِدَعَائِ رَبِّي سَقِيًّا ۝

49. When he had turned away  
From them and from those  
Whom they worshipped besides  
God, We bestowed on him  
Isaac and Jacob, and each one  
Of them We made a prophet. <sup>2501</sup>

٢٩- فَلَمَّا اعْتَرَاكُمْ وَابِعِبَادُنْ مِنْ دُونِ  
اللَّهِ وَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ  
وَكُلًّا جَعَلْنَا نَبِيًّا ۝

2498. Note the gentle persuasive tone of Abraham in his speeches in xix. 42-45 (for we may suppose those sentences to sum up a long course of arguments) and in xix. 47-48, contrasted with the brusque and repellent tone of the father's reply in this verse. The one was the outcome of the true Light which had come to Abraham from God, as the other was the outcome of Pagan arrogance and the worship of brute force. The spiritual lesson from this episode of Abraham's life may be stated in four propositions: (1) the pious son is dutiful to his father and wishes him well in all things, material and spiritual; (2) if the father refuses God's Light, the son will do his utmost to bring such Light to the father; (3) having received the Light, the son will never renounce that Light, even if he has to forfeit his father's love and renounce his home; (4) even if the father repels him and turns him out, his answer will be a soft answer, full of love and forgiveness on the one hand, but firmness on behalf of Truth on the other.

2499. Cf. ix. 114, where this promise of Abraham to pray for his father is referred to, and its limitations pointed out.

2500. Abraham left his father and the home of his fathers (Ur of the Chaldees) and never returned. He left because he was turned out, and because it was not possible for him to make any compromise with what was false in religion. In return for abuse, he spoke gentle words. And he expressed his fervent hope that at least he (Abraham) would have God's blessing in reply to his prayers. Here was a prefigurement of another Hijrat many centuries later! In both cases the prayer was abundantly fulfilled.

2501. Isaac and Jacob are mentioned here as carrying on one line of Abraham's traditions. The other line was carried on by Ismā'il, who is mentioned independently five verses lower down, as his line got special honour in the Holy Prophet of Islam. That is why his mention comes after that of Moses.

50. And We bestowed  
Of Our Mercy on them,  
And We granted them  
Lofty honour on the tongue<sup>2502</sup>  
Of truth.

٥٠- وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُمْ مِنْ رَحْمَتِنَا  
وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُمْ لِسَانَ صِدْقٍ عَلِيًّا ۝

## SECTION 4.

51. Also mention in the Book  
(The story of) Moses:  
For he was specially chosen,  
And he was an apostle  
(And) a prophet.<sup>2503</sup>

٥١- وَادْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ مُوسَى  
إِنَّهُ كَانَ مَخْصُوصًا  
وَكَانَ رَسُولًا نَبِيًّا ۝

52. And We called him  
From the right side<sup>2504</sup>  
Of Mount (Sinai), and made  
Him draw near to Us,  
Even to Our mysteries.

٥٢- وَنَادَيْنَاهُ مِنْ جَانِبِ الطُّورِ الْأَيْمَنِ  
وَقَرَّبْنَاهُ نَجِيًّا ۝

53. And, out of Our Mercy,<sup>2505</sup>  
We gave him his brother  
Aaron, (also) a prophet.

٥٣- وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ مِنْ رَحْمَتِنَا  
أَخَاهُ هَارُونَ نَبِيًّا ۝

2502. Abraham and his son and grandson Isaac and Jacob, and their line, maintained the banner of God's spiritual truth for many generations, and they won deservedly high praise—the praise of truth—on the tongues of men. Abraham prayed that he should be praised by the tongue of truth among men to come in later ages: xxvi, 84. Ordinary praise may mean nothing: it may be due to selfish flattery on the part of others or artful management by the person praised. Praise on the tongue of sincere truth is praise indeed!

2503. Moses was (1) especially chosen, and therefore prepared and instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, in order that he might free his people from Egyptian bondage; there may also be a reference to Moses's title of *Kalimullāh*, the one to whom God spoke without the intervention of angels but behind a cloud: see iv. 164, and n. 670; (2) he was a prophet (*nabī*), in that he received inspiration; and (3) he was an apostle (*rasūl*) in that he had a Book of Revelation, and an Ummat or organised Community, for which he instituted laws.

2504. The incident here I think refers to the incidents described more fully in xx. 9-36; a reference may also be made to Exod. iii, 1-18 and iv. 1-17. There is a great deal of mystic meaning. The time is when Moses (with his family) was travelling and grazing the flocks of his father-in-law Jethro, just before he got his commission from God. The place is somewhere near Mount Sinai (*Jabal Mūsā*). Moses sees a Fire in the distance, but when he goes there, he hears a voice that tells him it is sacred ground. God asked him to put off his shoes and to draw near, and when he went near, great mysteries were revealed to him. He was given his commission, and his brother Aaron was given to him to go with him and aid him. It is after that that he and Aaron went and faced Pharaoh in Egypt, as narrated in vii, 103-144, etc. The *right side* of the mountain may mean that Moses heard the voice from the right side of the mountain as he faced it; or it may have the figurative meaning of "right" in Arabic, i.e., the side which was blessed or sacred ground.

2505. Moses was diffident, and reluctant to go to Pharaoh as he had an impediment in his tongue, and he asked that his brother Aaron should be associated with him in his mission. God in His Mercy granted his request: xx. 25-36.

54. Also mention in the Book

(The story of) Ismā'il:  
He was (strictly) true  
To what he promised,<sup>2506</sup>  
And he was an apostle  
(And) a prophet.

٥٤- وَأَذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِسْمَاعِيلَ  
إِنَّهُ كَانَ صَادِقَ الْوَعْدِ  
وَكَانَ رَسُولًا نَبِيًّا ۝

55. He used to enjoin

On his people Prayer  
And Charity, and he was  
Most acceptable in the sight  
Of his Lord.<sup>2507</sup>

٥٥- وَكَانَ يَأْمُرُ أَهْلَهُ بِالصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ  
وَكَانَ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ مَرْضِيًّا ۝

56. Also mention in the Book

The case of Idrīs:<sup>2508</sup>  
He was a man of truth  
(And sincerity), (and) a prophet:

٥٦- وَأَذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِدْرِيْسَ  
إِنَّهُ كَانَ صِدِّيقًا نَبِيًّا ۝

57. And We raised him
- 
- To a lofty station.

٥٧- وَرَفَعْنَاهُ مَكَانًا عَلِيًّا ۝

58. Those were some

Of the prophets on whom  
God did bestow His Grace,—  
Of the posterity of Adam,  
And of those whom We  
Carried (in the Ark)  
With Noah, and of  
The posterity of Abraham<sup>2509</sup>  
And Israel—of those  
Whom We guided and chose.

٥٨- أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ  
عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّةِ آدَمَ  
وَمِمَّنْ حَمَلْنَا مَعَ نُوحٍ  
وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّةِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ  
وَإِسْرَءِيلَ وَمِمَّنْ هَدَيْنَا وَاجْتَبَيْنَا ۝

2506. Ismā'il was *Zabīḥullah*, i.e., the chosen sacrifice of God in Muslim tradition. When Abraham told him of the sacrifice, he voluntarily offered himself for it, and never flinched from his promise, until the sacrifice was redeemed by the substitution of a ram under God's commands. He was the fountain-head of the Arabian Ummat, and in his posterity came the Apostle of God.

2507. An acceptable sacrifice: see last note.

2508. Idrīs is mentioned twice in the Qur-ān, viz.: here and in xxi. 85, where he is mentioned among those who patiently persevered. His identification with the Biblical Enoch, who "walked with God" (Gen. v. 21-24), may or may not be correct. Nor are we justified in interpreting verse 57 here as meaning the same thing as in Gen. v. 24 ("God took him"), that he was taken up without passing through the portals of death. All we are told is that he was a man of truth and sincerity, and a prophet, and that he had a high position among his people. It is this point which brings him in the series of men just mentioned: he kept himself in touch with his people, and was honoured among them. Spiritual progress need not cut us off from our people, for we have to help and guide them. He kept to truth and piety in the highest station.

2509. The earlier generations are grouped into three epochs from a spiritual point of view: (1) from Adam to Noah, (2) from Noah to Abraham, and (3) from Abraham to an indefinite time, say to the time when the Message of God was corrupted and the need arose for the final Apostle of Unity and Truth. Israel is another name for Jacob.

Whenever the Signs  
Of (God) Most Gracious  
Were rehearsed to them,<sup>2510</sup>  
They would fall down  
In prostrate adoration  
And in tears.

إِذَا تُنْزِلُ عَلَيْهِمْ  
آيَاتُ الرَّحْمَنِ  
خَرُّوا سُجَّدًا وَبُكِيًّا ۝

59. But after them there followed  
A posterity who missed  
Prayers and followed after lusts :  
Soon, then, will they  
Face Destruction,—<sup>2511</sup>

۝۵۹- فَخَلَفَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ خَلْفٌ أَضَاعُوا  
الصَّلَاةَ وَاتَّبَعُوا الشَّهَوَاتِ فَسُوفَ يَلْقَوْنَ  
عَذَابًا ۝

60. Except those who repent  
And believe, and work  
Righteousness : for these  
Will enter the Garden  
And will not be wronged  
In the least,—

۝۶۰- إِلَّا مَنْ تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ  
صَالِحًا فَأُولَٰئِكَ يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ  
وَلَا يُظْلَمُونَ شَيْئًا ۝

61. Gardens of Eternity, those  
Which (God) Most Gracious  
Has promised to His servants  
In the Unseen : for His promise  
Must (necessarily) come to pass.

۝۶۱- جَنَّاتُ عَدْنٍ الَّتِي وَعَدَ الرَّحْمَنُ  
عِبَادَهُ بِالْغَيْبِ  
إِنَّهَا كَانَ وَعْدُهُ مَأْتِيًّا ۝

62. They will not there hear  
Any vain discourse, but  
Only salutations of Peace :<sup>2512</sup>  
And they will have therein  
Their sustenance,<sup>2513</sup> morning  
And evening.

۝۶۲- لَا يَسْمَعُونَ فِيهَا لَغْوًا إِلَّا سَلَامًا  
وَلَهُمْ فِيهَا مَرْغُوبَاتٌ كُلِّ يَوْمٍ  
فِيهَا ۝

2510. The original is in the Aorist tense, implying that the "Posterity" alluded to includes not only the apostles but their worthy followers who are true to God and uphold His standard.

2511. This selfish godless posterity gains the upper hand at certain times, but even then there is always a minority who see the error of their ways, repent and believe, and live righteous lives. They are not penalised in the Hereafter because they were associated with the ungodly in time. They reap the full reward of their faith and righteousness.

2512. *Salām*, translated "Peace", has a much wider signification. It includes (1) a sense of security and permanence, which is unknown in this life; (2) soundness, freedom from defects, perfection, as in the word *salīm*; (3) preservation, salvation, deliverance, as in the word *sallama*; (4) salutation, accord with those around us; (5) resignation, in the sense that we are satisfied and not discontented; besides (6) the ordinary meaning of *Peace*, i.e., freedom from any jarring element. All these shades of meaning are implied in the word *Islām*. Heaven therefore is the perfection of *Islām*.

2513. *Sustenance* in the highest metaphorical sense, all the means of perfect satisfaction of the soul and its complete self-expression in the new conditions, which we can only imagine vaguely in our material life. *Morning and evening* : i.e., early and late, all the time, always.

63. Such is the Garden which  
We give as an inheritance  
To those of Our servants  
Who guard against evil.

١٣- تِلْكَ الْجَنَّةُ الَّتِي نُورِثُ  
مِنْ عِبَادِنَا مَنْ كَانَ تَقِيًّا ۝

64. (The angels say :) <sup>2514</sup>  
"We descend not but  
By command of thy Lord:  
To Him belongeth what is  
Before us and what is  
Behind us, and what is  
Between: and thy Lord  
Never doth forget,—

١٤- وَمَا نَنْزِلُ إِلَّا بِأَمْرِ رَبِّكَ  
لَهُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِينَا وَمَا  
خَلْفَنَا وَمَا بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ  
وَمَا كَانَ رَبُّكَ نَسِيًّا ۝

65. "Lord of the heavens  
And of the earth,  
And of all that is  
Between them: so worship Him,  
And be constant and patient  
In His worship: knowest thou  
Of any who is worthy  
Of the same Name as He?" <sup>2515</sup>

١٥- رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ  
وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا فَاعْبُدْهُ  
وَاصْطَبِرْ لِعِبَادَتِهِ  
هَلْ تَعْلَمُ لَهُ سَمِيًّا ۝

- C. 141.—Why should man disbelieve in the Hereafter?  
(xix. 66-98.) We all must pass through the fire of temptation,  
But God Most Gracious will save us  
If we accept Him and do right. Sin  
May have its respite, but must run  
To its own destruction. We must not  
Dishonour God by holding false  
And monstrous ideas of Him. Glory  
To Him that He cares for all His creatures!

#### SECTION 5.

66. Man says: "What!  
When I am dead, shall I  
Then be raised up alive?"

١٦- وَيَقُولُ الْإِنْسَانُ  
إِذَا كُنَّا مِثْلَ سَوْفٍ أَخْرَجْ حَيًّا ۝

2514. We are apt to be impatient of the evils we see around us. We may give of our best service to God, and yet see no results. In our human short-sightedness we may complain within ourselves. We may address the Spirit of God, as Shelley addressed the Spirit of Poesy, "Rarely, rarely comest thou, Spirit of Delight!" But we must not be impatient. The angels of Grace come not haphazard, but by command of God according to His Universal Will and Purpose. God does not forget. If things are delayed, it is in accordance with a wise providence, which cares for all. Our plain duty is to be patient and constant in His service.

2515. The more we taste of the truth and mystery of life, the more we realise that there is no one to be mentioned in the same breath as God. He is above all names. But when we think of His beautiful qualities, and picture them to ourselves by names which give us some idea of Him, we can search the whole wide world of our imagination, and we shall not find another to be compared with Him in name or quality. He is the One: praise be to Him!

67. But does not man  
Call to mind that We  
Created him before  
Out of nothing ?
68. So, by thy Lord,  
Without doubt, We shall gather  
Them together, and (also)  
The Evil Ones (with them); <sup>2516</sup>  
Then shall We bring them  
Forth on their knees  
Round about Hell; <sup>2517</sup>
69. Then shall We certainly  
Drag out from every sect  
All those who were worst  
In obstinate rebellion  
Against (God) Most Gracious.
70. And certainly We know best  
Those who are most worthy  
Of being burned therein.
71. Not one of you but will <sup>2518</sup>  
Pass over it: this is,  
With thy Lord, a Decree  
Which must be accomplished.
72. But We shall save those  
Who guarded against evil,  
And We shall leave  
The wrong-doers therein,  
(Humbled) to their knees.

٦٧-أَوَلَا يَذْكُرُ الْإِنْسَانُ أَنَّا  
خَلَقْنَاهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَلَمْ يَكْ شَيْئًا ۝

٦٨-قَوْلِكَ لَنُخْشِرَنَّهُمْ  
وَالشَّيَاطِينَ ثُمَّ لَنُخْضِرَنَّهُمْ  
حَوْلَ جَهَنَّمَ جِثِيًا ۝

٦٩-ثُمَّ لَنَنْزِعَنَّ مِنْ كُلِّ شِيعَةٍ  
أَسْءَلَ أَشَدُّ عَلَى الرَّحْمَنِ عِتِيًّا ۝

٧٠-ثُمَّ لَنَعْنُنَّ أَعْلَمُ بِالَّذِينَ  
هُمْ أَوْلَىٰ بِهَا صِلِيًّا ۝

٧١-وَإِنْ مِنْكُمْ إِلَّا وَارِدُهَا  
كَانَ عَلَىٰ رَبِّكَ حَتْمًا مَقْضِيًّا ۝

٧٢-ثُمَّ نُنْفِئُ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا  
وَنَذَرُ الظَّالِمِينَ فِيهَا جِثِيًّا ۝

2516. The disbelief in a future state is not merely a philosophic doubt, but a warped will, a disingenuous obstinacy in face of our inner spiritual instincts and experiences. We were nothing before. Can not the same God Who created us out of nothing also continue our personality? But if we refuse to accept His light and guidance, our state will grow worse and worse. We shall be deprived of His grace. We shall be herded with the Evil Ones. In utter humiliation we shall be faced with all the consequences of our refusal of Truth.

2517. *Round about Hell*: There are many ways leading to evil, and people get to it from all round. Hence the allegory of the seven Gates to Hell: see xv. 44, and n. 1977.

2518. Three interpretations are possible. (1) The general interpretation is that every soul must pass through or by or over the Fire. It may be the fire of temptation or anxiety or distress; but they must see Hell. Those who have had Taqwā (see n. 26 to ii, 2) will be saved by God's Mercy, while unrepentant sinners will suffer the torments in ignominy. (2) If we refer the pronoun "you" to those "in obstinate rebellion" in verse 69 above, both leaders and followers in sin, this verse only applies to the wicked. (3) Some refer this verse to the Bridge over Hell, the Bridge *Ṣirāṭ*, over which all must pass to their final Destiny. This Bridge is not mentioned in the Qur-ān.

73. ~~When~~ When Our Clear Signs  
Are rehearsed to them,  
The Unbelievers say to those  
Who believe, "Which of the two  
Sides is best in point of  
Position? which makes the best  
Show in Council?" 2519

٤٣- وَإِذَا تُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُنَا بَيِّنَاتٌ  
قَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَمْ يَدْعُونَ  
الْفَرِيقَيْنِ خَيْرٌ مَّقَامًا وَآخَسُنْ  
نَدِيًّا ۝

74. But how many (countless)  
Generations before them  
Have We destroyed,  
Who were even better  
In equipment and in glitter  
To the eye?

٤٤- وَكَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُمْ  
مِنْ قَرْنٍ هُمْ أَخْسَنُ  
أَتَانًا وَفِرًّا ۝

75. Say: "If any men go  
Astray, (God) Most Gracious  
Extends (the rope) to them,  
Until, when they see  
The warning of God (being  
Fulfilled)—either in punishment 2520  
Or in (the approach of)  
The Hour,—they will  
At length realise who is  
Worst in position, and (who)  
Weakest in forces!

٤٥- قُلْ مَنْ كَانَ فِي الضَّلَالَةِ  
فَلْيَمْدُدْ لَهُ الرَّحْمَنُ مَدًّا ۖ  
حَتَّىٰ إِذَا رَأَوْا مَا يُوعَدُونَ إِنْكَارَ الْعَذَابِ  
وَإِنَّمَا السَّاعَةُ ۖ  
فَسَيَعْلَمُونَ مَنْ هُوَ  
شَرُّ مَكَانًا وَأَضْعَفُ جُندًا ۝

76. "And God doth advance  
In guidance those who seek  
Guidance; and the things  
That endure, Good Deeds, 2521  
Are best in the sight  
Of thy Lord, as rewards,  
And best in respect of  
(Their) eventual returns."

٤٦- وَيَزِيدُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ اهْتَدَوْا هُدًى  
وَالْبَقِيَّةُ الطَّيِّبَاتِ  
خَيْرٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ ثَوَابًا  
وُخَيْرُ مَرَدًا ۝

2519. The Unbelievers may, for a time, make a better show in worldly position, or in people's assemblages where things are judged by the counting of heads. But Truth must prevail even in this world, and ultimately the positions must be reversed.

2520. God's warning is that every evil deed must have its punishment, and that there will be a Hereafter, the Day of Judgment, or the Hour, as it is frequently called. The punishment of evil often begins in this very life. For instance, over-indulgence and excesses of all kinds bring on their Nemesis quite soon in this very life. But some subtler forms of selfishness and sin will be punished—as every evil will be punished—in its own good time, as the Hour approaches. In either case, the arrogant boasting sinners will realise that their taunt—who is best in position and in forces? (xix, 73)—is turned against themselves.

2521. These lines are the same as in xviii. 46 (second clause), (where see n. 2387), except that the word *maradd* (eventual returns) is here substituted for *amal* (hope). The meaning is practically the same: but "hope" is more appropriate in the passage dealing generally with this world's goods, and "eventual return" in the passage dealing with the sinner's specific investments and commitments in worldly position and organised cliques.



77. ~~Is~~ Hast thou then seen  
The (sort of) man who  
Rejects Our Signs, yet  
Says: "I shall certainly  
Be given wealth and children?" <sup>2522</sup>

۞ اقْرَأْ يَتِ الَّذِي كَفَرَ يَا بَيْتَنَا  
وَقَالَ لَأَوْثَقِينَ مَالًا وَلَدًا ۝

78. Has he penetrated to  
The Unseen, or has he  
Taken a contract with  
(God) Most Gracious?

۞ اَطْلَعَ الْغَيْبِ اَوْ  
اَتَّخَذَ عِنْدَ الرَّحْمَنِ عَهْدًا ۝

79. Nay! We shall record  
What he says, and We  
Shall add and add  
To his punishment. <sup>2523</sup>

۞ كَلَّا سَنَكْتُبُ مَا يَقُولُ وَ  
نُضِلُّ لَهُ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ مَدًّا ۝

80. To Us shall return <sup>2524</sup>  
All that he talks of,  
And he shall appear  
Before Us bare and alone.

۞ وَكُرْهُهُ مَا يَقُولُ  
وَيَأْتِينَا فَرْدًا ۝

81. And they have taken  
(For worship) gods other than  
God to give them  
Power and glory! <sup>2525</sup>

۞ وَاتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ  
إِلَٰهَةً لِّيَكُونُوا لَهُمْ عِزًّا ۝

82. Instead, they shall reject  
Their worship, and become  
Adversaries against them. <sup>2526</sup>

۞ كَلَّا سَيَكْفُرُونَ بِعِبَادَتِهِمْ وَيَكُونُونَ  
عَلَيْهِمْ عَدُوًّا ۝

2522. Besides the man who boasts of wealth and power in actual possession, there is a type of man who boasts of getting them in the future and builds his worldly hopes thereon. Is he sure? He denies God, and His goodness and Mercy. But all good is in the hands of God. Can such a man then bind God to bless him when he rejects faith in God? Or does he pretend that he has penetrated to the mysteries of the future? For no man can tell what the future holds for him.

2523. Such a man deserves double punishment,—for rejecting God, and for his blasphemies with His holy name.

2524. Literally, "We shall inherit". Cf. xix. 40, and n. 2492. Even if the man had property and power, it must go back to the Source of all things, and the man must appear before the Judgment-seat, alone and unaccompanied, stripped of all the things from which he expected so much!

2525. 'izz=exalted rank, glory, power, might, the ability to impose one's will or to carry out one's will.

2526. Cf. x. 28-30, where the idols deny that they knew anything of their worship, and leave their worshippers in the lurch; and v. 119, where Jesus denies that he asked for worship, and leaves his false worshippers to the punishment or mercy of God.

## SECTION 5.

83. Seest thou not that We  
Have set the Evil Ones on  
Against the Unbelievers,  
To incite them with fury ? <sup>2527</sup>

٨٣- أَلَمْ نَرِ أَنَّكَ أَنْزَلْنَا الشَّيَاطِينَ  
عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ تُوْزَعُهُمْ أَذًا ۝

84. So make no haste  
Against them, for We  
But count out to them  
A (limited) number (of days).

٨٤- فَلَا تَعْجَلْ عَلَيْهِمْ  
إِنَّمَا نَعُدُّ لَهُمْ عَدًّا ۝

85. The day We shall gather  
The righteous to (God)  
Most Gracious, like a band  
Presented before a king for honours,

٨٥- يَوْمَ نَحْشُرُ الْمُتَّقِينَ  
إِلَى الرَّحْمَنِ وَفْدًا ۝

86. And We shall drive  
The sinners to hell,  
Like thirsty cattle  
Driven down to water, — <sup>2528</sup>

٨٦- وَنُسَوِّي السُّجُومِينَ إِلَى جَهَنَّمَ  
وَمُرْدًا ۝

87. None shall have the power  
Of intercession, but such a one  
As has received permission (or  
promise)  
From (God) Most Gracious.

٨٧- لَا يَنْبَلِكُونَ الشَّفَاعَةَ إِلَّا مَنِ  
اتَّخَذَ عِنْدَ الرَّحْمَنِ عَهْدًا ۝

88. They say : “ (God) Most  
Gracious  
Has begotten a son ! ”

٨٨- وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ الرَّحْمَنُ وَلَدًا ۝

89. Indeed ye have put forth  
A thing most monstrous ! <sup>2529</sup>

٨٩- لَقَدْ جِئْتُمْ شَيْئًا إِذَا ۝

2527. Under the laws instituted by God, when evil reaches a certain stage of rebellion and defiance, it is left to gather momentum and to rush with fury to its own destruction. It is given a certain amount of respite, as a last chance; but failing repentance, its days are numbered. The godly therefore should not worry themselves over the apparent worldly success of evil, but should get on with their own duties in a spirit of trust in God.

2528. Note the contrast between the saved and the doomed. The one march with dignity like honoured ones before a king, and the other rush in anguish to their punishment like a herd of cattle driven down by thirst to their watering place. Note the metaphor of the water. They rush madly for water but are plunged into the Fire!

2529. The belief in God begetting a son is not a question merely of words or of speculative thought. It is a stupendous blasphemy against God. It lowers God to the level of an animal. If combined with the doctrine of vicarious atonement, it amounts to a negation of God's justice and man's personal responsibility. It is destructive of all moral and spiritual order, and is condemned in the strongest possible terms.

90. At it the skies are ready  
To burst, the earth  
To split asunder, and  
The mountains to fall down  
In utter ruin,
91. That they should invoke  
A son for (God) Most Gracious.
92. For it is not consonant  
With the majesty of (God)  
Most Gracious that He  
Should beget a son.<sup>2530</sup>
93. Not one of the beings  
In the heavens and the earth  
But must come to (God)  
Most Gracious as a servant.
94. He does take an account  
Of them (all), and hath  
Numbered them (all) exactly.<sup>2531</sup>
95. And every one of them  
Will come to Him singly  
On the Day of Judgment.
96. On those who believe  
And work deeds of righteousness,  
Will (God) Most Gracious  
Bestow Love.<sup>2532</sup>
97. So have We made  
The (Qur-ān) easy  
In thine own tongue,  
That with it thou mayest give

۹۰-يَكَادُ السَّمَوَاتُ يَتَفَطَّرْنَ مِنْهُ  
وَتَشَقُّ الْأَرْضُ  
وَتَخْرُ الْجِبَالُ هُذًا ۝

۹۱-أَنْ دَعَا الرَّحْمَنَ وَلَدًا ۝

۹۲-وَمَا يَنْبَغِي لِلرَّحْمَنِ  
أَنْ يَتَّخِذَ وَلَدًا ۝

۹۳-إِنْ كُلُّ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ  
إِلَّا أَتَى الرَّحْمَنَ عَبْدًا ۝

۹۴-لَقَدْ أَحْصَاهُمْ وَعَدَّهُمْ عَدًّا ۝

۹۵-وَكُلُّهُمْ أَتِيهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ فَرْدًا ۝

۹۶-إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ  
سَيَجْعَلُ لَهُمُ الرَّحْمَنُ وُدًّا ۝

۹۷-فَوَلِّمَا يَسْرَتْنَاهُ لِبَلْسَانِكَ

2530. This basic principle was laid down early in the argument (xix. 35). It was illustrated by a reference to the personal history of many apostles, including Jesus himself, who behaved justly as men to their kith and kin and humbly served God. The evil results of such superstitions were pointed out in the case of many previous generations which went to their ruin by dishonouring God. And the argument is now rounded off towards the close of the Sūra.

2531. God has no sons or favourites or parasites, such as we associate with human beings. On the other hand every creature of His gets His love and His cherishing care. Every one of them, however humble, is individually marked before His Throne of Justice and Mercy, and will stand before Him on his own deserts.

2532. His own love, and the love of man's fellow-creatures, in this world and in the Hereafter. Goodness breeds love and peace, and sin breeds hatred and contention.

Glad tidings to the righteous,  
And warnings to people  
Given to contention.

98. But how many (countless)  
Generations before them <sup>2533</sup>  
Have We destroyed? Canst thou  
Find a single one of them  
(Now) or hear (so much  
As) a whisper of them?

لَتُبَشِّرَ بِهِ الْمُتَّقِينَ وَتُنذِرَ بِهِ قَوْمًا  
لُّكَا

٩٨- وَكَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُمْ مِنْ قَرْنٍ

هَلْ يُحِشُّ مِنْهُمْ وَاحِدٌ

أَوْ تَسْمَعُ لَهُمْ رِكْزًا ۝



2533. Cf. xix. 74, from which this sentence is brought up as a reminiscence, showing the progress of sin, the Guidance which God gives to the good, the degradation of blasphemy, the respite granted, and the final End, when personal responsibility will be enforced.

INTRODUCTION TO SŪRA XX (*Tā Hā*).

The chronology of this Sūra has some significance: it has some relation to the spiritual lessons which it teaches.

It was used with great effect in that remarkable scene which resulted in Ḥaḍhrat 'Umar's conversion, and which took place about the seventh year before the Hijrat.

The scene is described with dramatic details by Ibn Hishām. 'Umar had previously been one of the greatest enemies and persecutors of Islam. Like his blood-thirsty kinsmen the Quraish, he meditated slaying the Prophet, when it was suggested to him that there were near relations of his that had embraced Islam. His sister Faṭīma and her husband Sa'id were Muslims, but in those days of persecution they had kept their faith secret. When 'Umar went to their house, he heard them reciting this Sūra from a written copy they had. For a while they concealed the copy. 'Umar attacked his sister and her husband, but they bore the attack with exemplary patience, and declared their faith. 'Umar was so struck with their sincerity and fortitude that he asked to see the leaf from which they had been reading. It was given to him: his soul was touched, and he not only came into the Faith but became one of its strongest supporters and champions.

The leaf contained some portion of this Sūra, perhaps the introductory portion. The mystic letters *Tā Hā* are prefixed to this Sūra. What do they mean? The earliest tradition is that they denote a dialectical interjection meaning "O man!" If so, the title is particularly appropriate in two ways. (1) It was a direct and personal address to a man in a high state of excitement, tempted by his temper to do grievous wrong, but called by God's Grace, as by a personal appeal, to face the realities, for God knew his inmost secret thoughts (xx. 7): the revelation was sent by God Most Gracious, out of His Grace and Mercy (xx. 5). (2) It takes up the story from the last Sūra, of man as a spiritual being and illustrates it in further details. It tells the story of Moses in the crisis of his life when he received God's Commission and in his personal relations with his mother, and how he came to be brought up in the Pharaoh's house, to learn all the wisdom of the Egyptians, for use in God's service, and in his personal relations with Pharaoh, whom we take to be his adoptive father (xxviii. 9). It further tells the story of a fallen soul who misled the Israelites into idolatry, and recalls how man's Arch-enemy Satan caused his fall. Prayer and praise are necessary to man to cure his spiritual blindness and appreciate God's revelation.

*Summary.*

The revelation of God (the Qur-ān) is not an occasion of distress, but is a gift of mercy from God Most Gracious (xx. 1-8, and C. 142).

How Moses was first chosen, and led to his mission to Pharaoh, with his brother Aaron (xx. 9-36, and C. 143).

How the mother of Moses was directed to cast the infant Moses into the river, to be brought up in Pharaoh's house under God's own supervision, in order to preach to Pharaoh and declare God's glory (xx. 37-76, and C. 144).

How Moses was directed to lead his people and quell their rebellious spirit, and how that spirit was stirred up by Sāmīrl (xx. 77-104 and C. 145).

On the Day of Judgment personal responsibility will be enforced, and God's Truth acknowledged: man should guard against Adam's enemy, Satan, and should renounce vanities, purify himself with prayer and praise, and await the call to God (xx. 105-135, and C. 146).

C. 142 — God's revelation is not an occasion  
(xx. 1-8.) For man's distress: it is a Message  
To show that God All-Knowing sits  
On the throne of Mercy and guides all affairs.  
There is no god but He: to Him  
Belong all the most beautiful Names.

## Sūra XX.

*Ṭa-Ha.* (Mystic Letters, Ṭ. H.)<sup>2534</sup>*In the name of God, Most Gracious,  
Most Merciful.*1. *Ṭa-Ha.*<sup>2534</sup>2. We have not sent down  
The Qur-ān to thee to be  
(An occasion) for thy distress,<sup>2535</sup>3. But only as an admonition  
To those who fear (God),—4. A revelation from Him  
Who created the earth  
And the heavens on high.5. (God) Most Gracious<sup>2535</sup>  
Is firmly established  
On the throne (of authority).6. To Him belongs what is  
In the heavens and on earth,  
And all between them,<sup>2537</sup>  
And all beneath the soil.7. If thou pronounce the word  
Aloud, (it is no matter):

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

طه ١

٢- مَا أَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ لِتَشْقَى ۝

٣- إِلَّا تَذَكَّرَ ۚ لَنْ يَخْشَى ۝

٤- تَنْزِيلًا مِّنْ خَلْقِ الْأَرْضِ  
وَالسَّمَوَاتِ الْعُلَى ۝

٥- الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَى ۝

٦- لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ  
وَمَا يَنبُئُهُمَا وَمَا تَحْتَ الثَّرَى ۝

٧- وَإِنْ يُجْهَرِ بِالْقَوْلِ فَآفَأْ ۝

2534. For an explanation see the Introduction to this Sūra. If the meaning is "O man!", that is itself a mystic meaning, as explained, but the letters form a word and would not be classified strictly as Abbreviated Letters: see n. 25 to ii. 1. This, however, is a question of classification and does not affect the meaning. That is conjectural, and no one can be dogmatic about it.

2535. God's revelation may cause some human trouble for two reasons: (1) it checks man's selfishness and narrowness of view, and (2) it annoys the wicked and causes them to jeer and persecute. These are mere incidental things, due to man's own shortcomings. As far as the trouble is concerned, the revelation is meant to give a warning, so that persecutors may be reclaimed, (and of course for men of faith it is a comfort and consolation, though that point does not arise in this context).

2536. Cf. x. 3, n. 1386. If things seem to be wrong in our imperfect vision on this earth, we must remember that God, Who encompasses all Creation and sits on the throne of Grace and Mercy, is in command, and our Faith tells us that all must be right. God's authority is not like an authority on earth, which may be questioned, or which may not last. His authority is "firmly established".

2537. An exhaustive definition of everything we can conceive of—what is in the heavens, on the earth, or between, or within the bowels of the earth

For verily He knoweth  
What is secret and what  
Is yet more hidden.<sup>2538</sup>

يَعْلَمُ الْغُيُوبَ ۝

8. God! there is no god  
But He! To Him belong  
The Most Beautiful Names.<sup>2539</sup>

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ  
الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَى ۝

C. 143.—The story of how Moses was chosen and told

(xx. 9-36.) Of his mission, has a high mystic meaning.  
He was true to his family and solicitous  
Of their welfare. Encamped in the desert,  
He saw a fire far off. Approaching,  
He found it was holy ground. God  
Did reveal Himself to him, so  
That he saw life in things lifeless,  
And light in his glorified Hand, that shone  
White with light divine. Armed  
With these Signs he was told to go forth  
On his mission. But he thought of his brother  
Aaron, and prayed that God might join him  
In his mission, and his prayer was granted.

9. ~~Was~~ the story of Moses<sup>2540</sup>  
Reached thee?

وَهَلْ أَتَاكَ حَدِيثُ مُوسَى ۝

10. Behold, he saw a fire:<sup>2541</sup>  
So he said to his family,

إِذْ رَأَيْنَا فَكُلًّا زَاغِلًا ۝

2538. There are two or three implications. (1) Whatever you profess, or say aloud, gives no information to God: He knows not only what is secret and perhaps unknown to others, but what people take special care to conceal. (2) It does you no good to make insincere professions: your hidden motives are known to Him, Who alone matters. (3) If you read the Word of God, or if you pray to God, it is not necessary to raise your voice: in either case, God will judge you by your inner thoughts, which are like an open book to Him.

2539. Cf. xvii. 110 and n. 2322. God is all in all, but the most beautiful things we can think of are referable to Him. A great deal is made, in our mystic philosophy, of the word "Name", which sums up attributes, and is almost equivalent to a Title of Honour.

2540. The story of Moses in its different incidents is told in many places in the Qur-an, and in each case the phase most appropriate in the context is referred to or emphasised. In ii. 49-61, it was a phase from the religious history of mankind; in vii. 103-162, it was a phase from the story of the Ummat (or nation) of Israel, and the story was continued to the times after Moses; in xvii. 101-103, we have a picture of the decline of a soul in the arrogance of Pharaoh; here, in xx. 9-24, we have a picture of the rise of a soul in the commission given to Moses from God; in xx. 25-36, we have his spiritual relationship with his brother Aaron; in xx. 37-40, we have his spiritual relations with his mother and sister, and his upbringing; in xx. 41-76, we have his spiritual combat with Pharaoh; and in xx. 77-98, we have his spiritual combat with his own people, the Israelites.

2541. A fire: It appeared like an ordinary fire, which always betokens the presence of men in a desert or a lonely place. Moses made for it alone, to fetch the wherewithal for making a fire for his family, and perhaps to find some direction as to the way, from the people he should meet there. But it was not an ordinary fire. It was a Burning Bush: a Sign of the Glory of God.



"Tarry ye; I perceive  
A fire; perhaps I can  
Bring you some burning brand  
Therefrom, or find some guidance  
At the fire."<sup>2542</sup>

11. But when he came  
To the fire, a voice  
Was heard: "O Moses!

12. "Verily I am thy Lord!  
Therefore (in My presence)<sup>2543</sup>  
Put off thy shoes: thou art  
In the sacred valley Ṭuwā."<sup>2544</sup>

13. "I have chosen thee:  
Listen, then, to the inspiration  
(Sent to thee).

14. "Verily, I am God:  
There is no god but I:  
Serve thou Me (only),  
And establish regular prayer  
For celebrating My praise.

15. "Verily the Hour is coming—<sup>2545</sup>  
My design is to keep it

اَمْكُتُوا لِي اَنْتُمْ نَارًا  
لَعَلَّيْ اَتِيكُمْ مِنْهَا بِقَبَسٍ  
اَوْ اُجِدُ عَلَى النَّارِ هُدًى  
۝ فَلَئِنْ اَتَيْنَاهَا لُؤْدًى يَمُنُّونِ ۝

۝-۱۲ اِنِّى اَنَا رَبُّكَ فَاخْلَعْ نَعْلَيْكَ اِنَّكَ  
بِالْوَادِ الْمُقَدَّسِ طُوًى ۝

۝-۱۳ وَاَنَا اخْتَرْتُكَ  
فَاَسْمِعْ لِمَا يُوحَى ۝

۝-۱۴ اِنِّى اَنَا اللّٰهُ لَا اِلٰهَ اِلَّا  
اَنَا فَاعْبُدْنِى  
وَاَقِمِ الصَّلٰوةَ لِذِكْرِى ۝

۝-۱۵ اِنَّ السَّاعَةَ اَتَتْهُ اَكَّادٌ

2542. The spiritual history of Moses begins here. It was his spiritual birth. His physical life, infancy, and upbringing are referred to later on, to illustrate another point. Moses, when he grew up, left the palace of Pharaoh and went to the Midianite people, in the Sinai peninsula. He married among them, and was now travelling with his family and his flocks, when he was called to his mission by God. He went to look for a fire for comfort and guidance. He found a higher and holier comfort and guidance. The whole passage is full of the highest mystic meaning, which is reflected in the short rhymed verses in the original. Both the rhythm and the meaning suggest the highest mystery.

2543. The shoes are to be put off as a mark of respect. In the parallel mystic meaning, Moses was now to put away his mere worldly interests, and anything of mere worldly utility, he having been chosen by the Most High God.

2544. This was the valley just below Mount Sinai, where subsequently he was to receive the Law. In the parallel mystic meaning, we are selected by trials in this humble life, whose valley is just as sacred and receives God's glory just as much as the heights of the Mount (Ṭuwā) if we but have the insight to perceive it.

2545. The first need is to mend our lives and worship and serve God, as in the last verse. The next is to realise the meaning of the Hereafter, when every soul will get the meed of his conduct in this life.

Hidden—<sup>2546</sup> for every soul  
To receive its reward  
By the measure of  
Its Endeavour.

16. "Therefore let not such as  
Believe not therein  
But follow their own  
Lusts, divert thee therefrom,<sup>2547</sup>  
Lest thou perish!"...

17. "And what is that  
In thy right hand,  
O Moses?"

18. He said, "It is <sup>2548</sup>  
My rod: on it  
I lean; with it  
I beat down fodder  
For my flocks; and  
In it I find  
Other uses."

19. (God) said, "Throw it,  
O Moses!"

20. He threw it, and behold!  
It was a snake,  
Active in motion.<sup>2549</sup>

أُخْفِيَهَا لِيُجْزَى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ  
بِمَا تَسْعَى ○

۱۶- فَلَا يَصُدُّكَ عَنْهَا مَنْ لَا يُؤْمِنُ بِهَا  
وَاتَّبِعْ هَوَاهُ فَتَرْدَى ○

۱۷- وَمَا تِلْكَ بِيَمِينِكَ يَمُوسَى ○

۱۸- قَالَ هِيَ عَصَايَ أَتَوَكَّؤُا عَلَيْهَا  
وَأَهْشُرُ بِهَا عَلَى غَنَمِي  
وَلِي فِيهَا مَأْرِبٌ أُخْرَى ○

۱۹- قَالَ أَلْقُهَا يَمُوسَى ○

۲۰- فَالْقَهَا فَإِذَا هِيَ حَيَّةٌ تَسْعَى ○

2546. *Ukhfi* may mean either "keep it hidden", or "make it manifest", and the Commentators have taken, some one meaning, and some the other. If the first is taken, it means that the exact hour or day when the Judgment comes is hidden from man; if the second, it means that the fact of the Judgment to come is made known, that man may remember and take warning. I think that both meanings are implied, as is the case in mystic interpretation.

2547. Moses had yet to meet the formidable opposition of the arrogant Pharaoh and his proud Egyptians, and later, the rebellion of his own people. In receiving his commission, he is warned of both dangers. The mystic meaning relates to man's own soul: when once the light reaches him let him hold fast to it, lest he perish. He will be beset with dangers of all kinds around him: the worst will be the danger of unbelieving people who seem to thrive on their selfishness and in following their own vain desires!

2548. Now comes the miracle of the Rod. The rod itself has a manifold mystic meaning. First of all, the attention of Moses himself is drawn to it, and he thinks of the ordinary uses to which he puts it in his daily life.

2549. Cf. vii. 107, where a different word (*shu'bān*) is used for "snake", and the qualifying adjective is "plain (for all to see)". The scene there is before Pharaoh and his magicians and people: the object is to show the hollowness of their magic by a miracle: the rod appears before them as a long and creeping, writhing serpent. Here there is a Symbol to present God's Mystery to Moses's mind and understanding: the rod becomes a *Hayy* (a live snake), and its active motion is what is most to be impressed on the mind of Moses, for there were no other spectators. So the highest spiritual mysteries can be grasped, with God's gift of insight, from the most ordinary things of daily use. Once they are grasped, there is no question of fear. They really are the virtues of this life lifted up to the glorious spiritual plane.

21. (God) said, "Seize it,  
And fear not: We  
Shall return it at once  
To its former condition" ...

22. "Now draw thy hand<sup>2550</sup>  
Close to thy side:  
It shall come forth white  
(And shining), without harm  
(Or stain),—as another Sign,—

23. "In order that We  
May show thee  
(Two) of our Greater Signs.

24. "Go thou to Pharaoh,<sup>2551</sup>  
For he has indeed  
Transgressed all bounds."

#### SECTION 2.

25. (Moses) said: "O my Lord!  
Expand me my breast;<sup>2552</sup>

26. "Ease my task for me;

27. "And remove the impediment<sup>2553</sup>  
From my speech,

28. "So they may understand  
What I say:

٢١- قَالَ خُذْهَا وَلَا تَخَفْ  
سَنُورِثُهَا سَيَرَّتْهَا الْأُولَى ۝

٢٢- وَأَضْمِ يَدَكَ إِلَى جَنَاحِكَ تَخْرُجُ  
بَيْضَاءَ مِنْ غَيْرِ سَوَاءٍ أَيْةٌ أُخْرَى ۝

٢٣- لِنُرِيكَ مِنْ آيَاتِنَا الْكُبْرَى ۝

٢٤- اذْهَبْ إِلَى فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّهُ طَغَى ۝

٢٥- قَالَ رَبِّ اشْرَحْ لِي صَدْرِي ۝

٢٦- وَيَسِّرْ لِي أَمْرِي ۝

٢٧- وَاحْلُلْ عُقْدَةً مِنْ لِسَانِي ۝

٢٨- يَفْقَهُوا قَوْلِي ۝

2550. The second of the greater Miracles shown to Moses was the "White (shining) Hand". Ordinarily, when the skin becomes white, it is a sign of disease, leprosy or something loathsome. Here there was no question of disease: on the contrary, the hand was glorified, and it shone as with a divine light. Such a miracle was beyond Egyptian or human magic. So, the instruments of our activity in daily life may be sanctified by being pressed close to that side of us which is spiritual: then they become bright and shining instruments for the carrying out of the divine Will. Or perhaps pressing the hand close to the side may be a metaphor for casting off fear: a bird when agitated shakes its wings about, but presses them close to its body when it sits composed. Cf. xxviii. 32.

2551. Moses, having been spiritually prepared, now gets his definite commission to go to Pharaoh and point out the error of his ways. So inordinate was Pharaoh's vanity that he had it in his mind to say: "I am your Lord Most High!" (lxxix. 24).

2552. The breast is reputed to be seat of knowledge and affections. The gift of the highest spiritual insight is what he prays for first. Cf. xciv. 1. This was the most urgent in point of time. There are three other things he also asks for: viz. (1) God's help in his task, which at first appears difficult to him; (2) the gift of eloquence, and the removal of the impediment from his speech; and (3) the counsel and constant attendance with him of his brother Aaron, whom he loved and trusted, for he would otherwise be alone among the Egyptians.

2553. Literally, "Loosen a knot from my tongue".

29. "And give me a Minister  
From my family,
30. "Aaron, my brother ;
31. "Add to my strength<sup>2554</sup>  
Through him,
32. "And make him share  
My task :
33. "That we may celebrate<sup>2555</sup>  
Thy praise without stint,
34. "And remember Thee  
Without stint:
35. "For Thou art He  
That (ever) regardeth us." <sup>2556</sup>
36. (God) said : " Granted  
Is thy prayer, O Moses ! "...

- ٢٩- وَاجْعَلْ لِي وَزِيرًا مِّنْ أَهْلِي ۝
- ٣٠- هَارُونَ أَخِي ۝
- ٣١- اشْدُدْ بِهِ أَزْرِي ۝
- ٣٢- وَأَشْرِكْهُ فِي أَمْرِي ۝
- ٣٣- كُنْ سَيِّدًا كَثِيرًا ۝
- ٣٤- وَذُنْ كَرِيمًا ۝
- ٣٥- إِنَّكَ كُنْتَ بِنَا بَصِيرًا ۝
- ٣٦- قَالَ قَدْ أُوتِيتَ سُؤْلَكَ يَا مُوسَى ۝

C. 144.—From his birth was Moses prepared for his task.  
(xx. 37-76.) His mother received guidance, so that

God's purpose might be fulfilled. Moses  
Was brought up in Pharaoh's palace and trained  
In all the learning of Egypt. Yet he drank  
The love of his people in his mother's milk.  
Adventures and trials he had, including  
His stay with the Midianites—until  
He was called to his double mission : to preach  
To Pharaoh and the Egyptians, and to free  
His own people. So he and Aaron went  
To Pharaoh, who rejected God and His Signs,  
But appointed a trial of strength between  
His magicians and Moses. Moses won ;  
And the Truth of God was accepted  
By some Egyptians, but not by Pharaoh.

2554. Literally, "Strengthen my back with him". A man's strength lies in his back and backbone so that he can stand erect and boldly face his tasks.

2555. The requests that Moses makes are inspired, not by earthly but by spiritual motives. The motive, expressed in the most general terms, is to glorify God, not in an occasional way, but systematically and continuously, "without stint." The clauses in this verse and the next, taken together, govern all the requests he makes, from verse 25 to verse 32.

2556. The celebration of God's praise and remembrance is one form of showing gratitude on the part of Moses for the Grace which God has bestowed upon him.

37. "And indeed We conferred  
A favour on thee  
Another time (before).

٣٧- وَلَقَدْ مَنَّا عَلَيْكَ مَرَّةً أُخْرَى ۝

38. "Behold! We sent<sup>2557</sup>  
To thy mother, by inspiration,  
The message:

٣٨- إِذْ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ أُمِّكَ مَا يُوحَىٰ ۝

39. "Throw (the child)  
Into the chest, and throw  
(The chest) into the river:  
The river will cast him  
Up on the bank, and he  
Will be taken up by one  
Who is an enemy to Me  
And an enemy to him':<sup>2558</sup>  
But I cast (the garment  
Of) love over thee from Me:<sup>2559</sup>  
And (this) in order that  
Thou mayest be reared  
Under Mine eye.<sup>2560</sup>

٣٩- أَلْقِ فِي الْفُتُوحِ فِي التَّابُوتِ  
فَأَلْقَيْنَاهُ فِي الْيَمِّ  
فَلْيَلْقَاهُ الْيَمُّ بِالسَّاحِلِ  
يَأْخُذْهُ عَدُوٌّ لِّي وَعَدُوٌّ لَهُ  
وَأَلْقَيْتُ عَلَيْكَ مَحَبَّةً مِنِّي  
وَلِتُصْنَعَ عَلَىٰ عَيْنِي ۝

40. "Behold! thy sister goeth forth  
And saith, 'Shall I show you

٤٠- إِذْ تَبْتَغِي عَنْكَ فَيَقُولُ هَلْ أَدُلُّكُمْ

2557. The story is not told, but only those salient points recapitulated which bear on the spiritual upbringing and work of Moses. Long after the age of Joseph, who had been a Wazir to one of the Pharaohs, there came on the throne of Egypt a Pharaoh who hated the Israelites and wanted them annihilated. He ordered Israelite male children to be killed when they were born. Moses's mother hid him for a time, but when further concealment was impossible, a thought came into her mind that she should put her child into a chest and send the chest floating down the Nile. This was not merely a foolish fancy of hers. It was God's Plan to bring up Moses in all the learning of the Egyptians, in order that that learning itself should be used to expose what was wrong in it and to advance the glory of God. The chest was floated into the river Nile. It flowed on into a stream that passed through Pharaoh's Garden. It was picked up by Pharaoh's people and the child was adopted by Pharaoh's wife. See xxviii. 4—13.

2558. Pharaoh was an enemy to God, because he was puffed up and he blasphemed, claiming to be God himself. He was an enemy to the child Moses, because he hated the Israelites and wanted to have their male children killed; also because Moses stood for God's revelation to come.

2559. God made the child comely and lovable, and he attracted the love of the very people who, on general grounds, would have killed him.

2560. See n. 2558 above. By making the child Moses so attractive as to be adopted into Pharaoh's household, not only was Moses brought up in the best way possible from an earthly point of view, but God's special Providence looked after him in bringing his mother to him, as stated in the next verse, and thus nourishing him on his mother's milk and keeping him in touch, in his inner growth, with the feelings and sentiments of his people Israel.

One who will nurse  
And rear the (child) ? <sup>2561</sup>  
So We brought thee back  
To thy mother, that her eye <sup>2562</sup>  
Might be cooled and she  
Should not grieve.  
Then thou didst slay <sup>2563</sup>  
A man, but We saved thee  
From trouble, and We tried  
Thee in various ways.  
Then didst thou tarry  
A number of years  
With the people of Midian. <sup>2564</sup>  
Then didst thou come hither  
As ordained, O Moses !

عَلَى مَنْ يَكْفُلُهُ  
فَرَجَعْنَاكَ إِلَىٰ أُمِّكَ  
كَى تَقْرَأَ عَيْنُهَا وَلَا تَحْزَنَ  
وَقَتَلْتَ نَفْسًا فَعَجَبْنَاكَ  
مِنَ الْغَمِّ وَقَتَلْنَاكَ فُتُورًا  
فَلَبِثْتَ مِثْرَيْنِ فِي أَهْلِ مَدْيَنَ  
ثُمَّ جِئْتَ عَلَىٰ قَدَرٍ يُمُوسَىٰ

41. "And I have chosen thee  
For Myself (for service) "...

۴۱- وَأَاصْطَنَعْتُكَ لِنَفْسِي ۚ

42. "So, thou and thy brother, <sup>2565</sup>  
With My Signs,

۴۲- إِيَّاكَ وَآخُوتَكَ بِآيَاتِي

2561. We may suppose that the anxious mother, after the child was floated on the water, sent the child's sister to follow the chest from the bank and see where and by whom it was picked up. When it was picked up by Pharaoh's own family and they seemed to love the child, she appeared like a stranger before them, and said, "Shall I search out a good wet-nurse for the child, that she may rear the child you are going to adopt?" That was exactly what they wanted. She ran home and told her mother. The mother was delighted to come and fold the infant in her arms again and feed it at her own breast, and all openly and without any concealment.

2562. The mother's eyes had, we may imagine, been sore with scalding tears at the separation from her baby. Now they were cooled: a phrase meaning that her heart was comforted.

2563. Years passed. The child grew up. In outward learning he was of the house of Pharaoh, in his inner soul and sympathy he was of Israel. One day, he went to the Israelite colony and saw all the Egyptian oppression under which Israel laboured. He saw an Egyptian smiting an Israelite, apparently with impunity. Moses felt brotherly sympathy and smote the Egyptian. He did not intend to kill him, but in fact the Egyptian died of the blow. When this became known, his position in Pharaoh's household became impossible. So he fled out of Egypt, and was only saved by God's grace. He fled to the Sinai Peninsula, to the land of the Midianites, and had various adventures. He married one of the daughters of the Midianite chief, and lived with the Midianites for many years, as an Egyptian stranger. He had many trials and temptations, but he retained his integrity of character.

2564. See last note. After many years spent in a quiet life, grazing his father-in-law's flocks, he came one day to the valley of Tuwā underneath the great mountain mass of Sinai, called Tūr (in Arabic). The peak on the Arabian side (where Moses was) was called Horeb by the Hebrews. Then was fulfilled God's Plan: he saw the fire in the distance, and when he went up, he was addressed by God and chosen to be God's Messenger for that age.

2565. We may suppose that Moses had fled alone to the land of Midian, and that he had now come alone (with his family but not with his brother) to Tuwā, as described in n. 2542 above. When he was honoured with his mission, and was granted his request that his brother Aaron should accompany him, we may suppose that he took steps to get Aaron to come to him, and their meeting was in Tuwā. Some time may be supposed to have elapsed before they were in Egypt, and then they prayed, and received these directions in their Egyptian home.

Aaron was either an elder or a younger brother,—we are not told which. In either case he was born when the ban on Israelite new-born babes was not in operation. Moses had been out of touch with him, and it speaks greatly for his family affection that he remembered him and prayed for his comradeship in the most serious spiritual work of his life.

And slacken not,  
Either of you, in keeping  
Me in remembrance.

43. "Go, both of you, to Pharaoh,<sup>2566</sup>  
For he has indeed  
Transgressed all bounds;<sup>2567</sup>

44. "But speak to him mildly;  
Perchance he may remember  
(Himself) or fear (God)."<sup>2568</sup>

45. They (Moses and Aaron) said:  
"Our Lord! We fear lest  
He hasten with insolence<sup>2569</sup>  
Against us, or lest he  
Transgress all bounds."

46. He said: "Fear not:  
For I am with you:  
I hear and see (everything).

47. "So go ye both to him,  
And say, 'Verily we are  
Apostles sent by thy Lord:  
Send forth, therefore, the Children  
Of Israel with us, and  
Afflict them not;<sup>2570</sup>  
With a Sign, indeed,  
Have we come from thy Lord!

وَلَا تَنْيَا فِي ذِكْرِي ۝

٢٣- اذْهَبَا إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ  
إِنَّهُ طَغَىٰ ۝

٢٤- فَقُولَا لَهُ قَوْلًا لَّيِّنًا لَّعَلَّهُ يَتَذَكَّرُ  
أَوْ يَخْشَىٰ ۝

٢٥- قَالَا رَبَّنَا إِنَّنَا نَخَافُ  
أَن يَغْرُبَ عَلَيْنَا أَوْ أَن يَطْغَىٰ ۝

٢٦- قَالَ لَا تَخَافَا إِنِّي مَعَكُمَا  
أَسْمَعُ وَأَرَىٰ ۝

٢٧- فَأَرْسِلْهُ فَقُولَا إِنَّا رَسُولَا رَبِّكَ  
فَارْسِلْ مَعَنَا بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ  
وَلَا تُعَذِّبْهُمْ  
قَدْ جِئْنَاكَ بِآيَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكَ ۝

2566. Their mission was in the first instance to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians, and then to lead Israel out of Egypt.

2567. Compare the same phrase in xx. 24. Having glanced at the early life of Moses we come back now to the time when Moses's actual ministry begins. The earlier personal story of Moses is rounded off.

2568. So far Pharaoh in his inordinate vanity had forgotten himself and forgotten how small a creature he was before God. This was to be brought to his recollection, so that he might perhaps repent and believe, or at least be deterred by fear from "transgressing all bounds". Some men eschew wrong from sincere love of God and understanding of their fellow-men, and some (of coarser minds) from the fear of consequences. Even the latter conduct may be a step to the former.

2569. They were now in Egypt (see n. 2565 above) and therefore in the power of the Pharaoh. The local atmosphere called for the greatest courage and firmness on their part to carry out the dangerous mission which had been entrusted to them.

2570. The Children of Israel were subjected to all sorts of oppression and indignities. They were given hard tasks; their leaders were unjustly beaten; they were forced to make bricks without straw; and they "groaned in bondage" (Exod. v. 6-19, vi. 5).

And Peace to all  
Who follow guidance !<sup>2571</sup>

وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَىٰ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ الْهُدَىٰ

48. " 'Verily it has been revealed  
To us that the Penalty  
(Awaits) those who reject  
And turn away.' "

۴۸- إِنَّا قَدْ أُوحِيَ إِلَيْنَا أَنَّ الْعَذَابَ  
عَلَىٰ مَنْ كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلَّىٰ

49. (When this message was  
delivered),  
(Pharaoh) said : " Who, then,  
O Moses, is the Lord<sup>2572</sup>  
Of you two ? "

۴۹- قَالَ فَمَنْ  
رَبُّكُمَا يُؤْمِنُ

50. He said : " Our Lord is  
He Who gave to each  
(Created) thing its form  
And nature, and further,  
Gave (it) guidance." <sup>2573</sup>

۵۰- قَالَ رَبُّنَا الَّذِي أَعْطَىٰ  
كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلْقَهُ ثُمَّ هَدَىٰ

51. (Pharaoh) said : " What then  
Is the condition  
Of previous generations ? " <sup>2574</sup>

۵۱- قَالَ فَمَا بَالُ الْقُرُونِ الْأُولَىٰ

2571. God, in His infinite Mercy, always offers Peace to the most hardened sinners, even those who are warring against Him. But, as stated in the next verse, their defiance cannot go on with impunity indefinitely. The punishment must inevitably come for sin, whether the sinner is great or small.

2572. Notice how subtly Pharaoh rejects the implication in Moses's speech, in which Moses had referred to "thy Lord" (verse 47). Pharaoh implicitly repudiates the suggestion that the God who had sent Moses and Aaron could possibly be Pharaoh's Lord. He asks insolently, "Who is this Lord of yours, of Whom ye speak as having sent you ?"

2573. The answer of Moses is straightforward, dignified, and illuminating. He will not dispute about "my Lord" or "your Lord," the God of Israel, or the God of Egypt. He and his brother were proud to serve "our Lord," but He was the universal Lord and Cherisher, the One and Only God, Who had created all beings and all things. It was from Him that each created thing derived its form and nature, including such free-will and power as man had got. He, Pharaoh, was subject to the same condition. In order that the free-will should be rightly exercised, God had given guidance through His Messengers and His Signs. Moses and Aaron stood as such Messengers, with such Signs. Will Pharaoh now understand and do right ?

2574. But Pharaoh was not the man to accept teaching from the despised Israelite—one, too, who in his eyes was a renegade from the higher Egyptian civilisation. "If," he says in effect, "there is only one God, to Whom all things are referred, this is a new religion. What of the religion of our ancestors ? Were they wrong in worshipping the Egyptian gods ? And if they were wrong, are they in misery now ?" He wanted to trap Moses into a scathing denunciation of his ancestors, which would at once have deprived him of the sympathy or the hearing of the Egyptian crowd.



52. He replied : " The knowledge  
Of that is with my Lord,<sup>2575</sup>  
Duly recorded : my Lord  
Never errs, nor forgets,—

٥٢- قَالَ عَلِمَهَا عِنْدَ رَبِّي  
فِي كِتَابٍ لَا يَضِلُّ رَبِّي وَلَا يَنْسَى ُ

53. " He Who has made for you  
The earth like a carpet  
Spread out ; has enabled you  
To go about therein by roads<sup>2576</sup>  
(And channels) ; and has sent  
Down water from the sky."  
With it have We produced<sup>2577</sup>  
Divers pairs of plants<sup>2578</sup>  
Each separate from the others

٥٣- الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ مَهْدًا  
وَسَلَكَ لَكُمُ فِيهَا سُبُلًا  
وَأَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً  
فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ أَزْوَاجًا مِّنْ بَيْنَابِ شَيْءٍ ۝

54. Eat (for yourselves) and pasture  
Your cattle : verily, in this  
Are Signs for men  
Endued with understanding.

٥٤- كُلُوا وَارْعَوْا أَنْعَامَكُمْ  
إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّأُولِي النُّهَى ۝

### SECTION 3.

55. ~~From~~ From the (earth) did We  
Create you, and into it  
Shall We return you,  
And from it shall We  
Bring you out once again.<sup>2579</sup>

٥٥- مِنهَا خَلَقْنَاهُ وَفِيهَا  
نُعِيدُكُمْ وَمِنهَا نُخْرِجُكُمْ تَارَةً أُخْرَى ۝

56. ~~And~~ And We showed Pharaoh  
All Our Signs, but he  
Did reject and refuse.<sup>2580</sup>

٥٦- وَلَقَدْ آرَيْنَاهُ آيَاتِنَا كُلَّهَا  
فَكَذَّبَ وَابَى ۝

2575 Moses did not fall into the trap. He remembered the injunction given to him to speak mildly (xx. 44). He speaks mildly, but does not in any way whittle down the truth. He said in effect : 'God's knowledge is perfect, as if, with men, it were a record. For men may make mistakes or may not remember, but God never mistakes and never forgets. But God is not only All-Knowing : He is also All-Good. Look around you : the whole earth is spread out like a carpet. Men go to and fro in it freely. He sends abundance of water from the skies, which comes down in Nile floods and fertilises the whole soil of Egypt, and feeds men and animals.'

2576. *Sabīl* means not only a road, but would include water-roads or channels, and in modern conditions, airways—in fact all means of communication.

2577. This seems to be outside the speech of Moses, and connects itself with the following verses 54—56, as part of the Word of God, expanding the speech of Moses and explaining the working of God's Providence in nature.

2578. *Aswāf* : we might translate here (as in xv. 88) by "classes" instead of "pairs" ; but as sex in plants seems to be referred to elsewhere (see xiii. 3, and n. 1804), I translate "pairs".

2579. This verse ought really to go into the last Section.

2580. This is a sort of general introduction to the spiritual combat between Moses and Pharaoh. The Signs are not only the countering of the fraudulent magic of Egypt with real miracles, but the subsequent Plagues (not mentioned here) and the Crossing of the Red Sea by Israel.

57. He said : " Hast thou come  
To drive us out  
Of our land with thy magic,<sup>2581</sup>  
O Moses ?

٤٨- قَالَ أَجِئْتَنَا بِسِحْرٍ  
مِنْ أَرْضِنَا بِسِحْرِكَ يَمُوسَى ○

58. " But we can surely produce  
Magic to match thine !  
So make a tryst  
Between us and thee,  
Which we shall not fail  
To keep—neither we nor thou—  
In a place where both  
Shall have even chances."<sup>2582</sup>

٥٨- فَلَنَأْتِيَنَّكَ بِسِحْرٍ مِثْلِهِ  
فَاَجْعَلْ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكَ مَوْعِدًا  
لَّا نُخْلِفُهُ نَحْنُ  
وَلَا أَنْتَ مَكَانًا سَوَى ○

59. Moses said : " Your tryst  
Is the Day of the Festival,<sup>2583</sup>  
And let the people be assembled  
When the sun is well up."

٥٩- قَالَ مَوْعِدُكُمْ يَوْمُ الزَّيْنَةِ  
وَأَنْ يَجْمَعُوا النَّاسَ ظَهْرُ

60. So Pharaoh withdrew :  
He concerted his plan,<sup>2584</sup>  
And then came (back).

٦٠- فَتَوَلَّى فِرْعَوْنُ فَجَمَعَ كَيْدَهُ  
ثُمَّ أَتَى ○

61. Moses said to him :  
" Woe to you ! Forge not  
Ye a lie against God,  
Lest He destroy you (at once)

٦١- قَالَ لَهُمْ مُوسَى وَيَكْمُرُ لَا تَقْتُلُوا  
عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا كَيْسَ حَكْمِكُمْ

2581. The Egyptians accused Moses of a design to deprive them of their land, and of exercising black magic. Both charges were palpably false. What Moses wanted to do was to free his people from bondage. The Egyptians had all the power in their possession ; they wished to use the Israelites as untouchable helots ; and any one who wanted to mitigate this injustice was branded as a dreadful person who wished to deprive them of their lawful rights. As to magic, the Egyptians judged Moses by themselves. They practised sorcery to deceive the people. They accuse the man of God of doing the same, though both his outlook and the source of his strength were altogether different.

2582. *Suwan* : literally, 'equal, even'. It has been construed to mean : (1) a place equally distant for both sides, a central place, or (2) equally convenient to both sides, or (3) an open level plain, where the people can collect with ease. All these are possible meanings, but the one I have adopted is more comprehensive, and includes the others, viz. : (4) a place where both sides shall have even chances, "a fair place," as Palmer laconically translates it.

2583. A great day of a Temple Festival, when the temples and streets were decorated, and people were on holiday, free from work. Moses makes this appointment in order to collect as large a number as possible, for his first duty is to preach the Truth. And he apparently did it with some effect with some Egyptians (xx. 70, 72-76), though the Pharaoh and his high and mighty officers rejected the Truth and afterwards paid the Penalty.

2584. Pharaoh was apparently taken aback at Moses appointing a solemn day of public Festival, when there would be a large concourse and there would be sure to be some people not in the Court clique, who might be critical of Pharaoh's own sorcerers. But probably there was something more in their dark counsels, something unfair and wicked, to which Moses refers in his speech in the next verse,

Utterly by chastisement :  
The forger must suffer<sup>2585</sup>  
Frustration ! ”

52. So they disputed, one with  
Another, over their affair,  
But they kept their talk secret.<sup>2586</sup>

63. They said : “ These two  
Are certainly (expert) magicians :  
Their object is to drive you  
Out from your land  
With their magic, and  
To take away  
Your most eminent chiefs.<sup>2587</sup>

64. “ Therefore concert your plan,  
And then assemble  
In (serried) ranks :  
He wins (all along) to-day  
Who gains the upper hand ” ...<sup>2588</sup>

65. They said : “ O Moses !  
Whether wilt thou  
That thou throw (first)  
Or that we be the first  
To throw ? ”

66. He said, “ Nay, throw ye  
First ! ” Then behold

بَعْدَآپ وَقَدْ خَابَ مِّنْ أَفْتَرَىٰ

٦٢- فَتَنَّا زُجْرًا وَأَمْرُهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ  
وَاسْتُرُوا النَّجْوَىٰ

٦٣- قَالُوا إِنَّ هَٰذِهِمُ لَسَٰحِرُونَ  
يُرِيدُونَ أَن يُخْرِجُكُمْ مِّنْ أَرْضِكُمْ  
بِسِحْرِهِمَآ  
وَيَذْهَبَآ بِطَرِيقَتِكُمُ الْمُثْلَىٰ

٦٤- فَاجْمَعُوا كَيْدَكُمْ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَا صَفًّا  
وَقَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْيَوْمَ مَنِ اسْتَعْلَىٰ

٦٥- قَالُوا يَمُوسَىٰ إِنَّمَا  
أَن تُلْقِيَ وَإِنَّا أَن نَّكُونَ أَوَّلَ  
مَنِ الْقَىٰ

٦٦- قَالَ بَلْ الْقَوَا فَاذَا

2585. Moses had some idea of their trickery and deceit. They would palm off their fraudulent magic as coming from God or from their gods ! He warns them that their tricks will stand exposed, and their hopes will be defeated.

2586. They knew that they had here to deal with no ordinary man, but a man with powers above what they could conceive of. But evil always thinks evil. Judging Moses and Aaron by their own standards, they thought that these two were also tricksters, with some tricks superior to their own. All they had to do was to stand together, and they must win. I construe xx. 63-64 to be their private talk among themselves, followed by their open challenge to Moses in xx. 65.

2587. Cf. xx. 104. Some Commentators understand, ‘And to do away with your most honoured Ways,’ meaning ‘your ancestral and time-honoured religion and magic’.

2588. Presumably Pharaoh was in this secret conference, and he promises the most lavish rewards to the magicians if they overcome Moses. See vii. 114. That—but I think more than that—is implied. That day was to be the crisis: if they won then, they would win all along, and Moses and his people would be crushed.

Their ropes and their rods—<sup>2589</sup>  
 So it seemed to him  
 On account of their magic—  
 Began to be in lively motion!

67. So Moses conceived  
 In his mind  
 A (sort of) fear.<sup>2590</sup>

68. We said: "Fear not!  
 For thou hast indeed  
 The upper hand:

69. "Throw that which is  
 In thy right hand:  
 Quickly will it swallow up  
 That which they have faked:  
 What they have faked  
 Is but a magician's trick:  
 And the magician thrives not,  
 (No matter) where he goes."<sup>2591</sup>

70. So the magicians were  
 Thrown down to prostration:  
 They said, "We believe  
 In the Lord of Aaron and  
 Moses"<sup>2592</sup>.

71. (Pharaoh) said: "Believe ye  
 In Him before I give  
 You permission? Surely  
 This must be your leader,  
 Who has taught you magic!<sup>2593</sup>  
 Be sure I will cut off

جِبَالُهُمْ وَعَصِيُّهُمْ يُخَيَّلُ إِلَيْهِ  
 مِنْ سِحْرِهِمْ أَنَّهَا تَسْعَى ○

٦٧- فَأَوْجَسَ فِي نَفْسِهِ خِيفَةً مُوسَى ○

٦٨- قُلْنَا لَا تَخَفْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْأَعْلَى ○

٦٩- وَأَلْقِ مَا فِي يَمِينِكَ  
 تَلْقَفْ مَا صَنَعُوا إِنَّمَا صَنَعُوا كَيْدٌ بَهِيرٌ  
 وَلَا يُفْلِحُ السَّاحِرُ حَيْثُ أَتَى ○

٧٠- فَأَلْقَى السَّحَرَةُ سُبُجًا  
 قَالُوا آمَنَّا بِرَبِّ هَارُونَ وَمُوسَى ○

٧١- قَالَ آمَنْتُمْ لَهُ قَبْلَ أَنْ آذَنَ لَكُمْ  
 إِنَّهُ لَكَبِيرُكُمُ الَّذِي عَلَّمَكُمُ السِّحْرَ  
 فَلَا قَطْعَ عَنِّ

2589. Their bag of tricks was so clever that it imposed upon all beholders. Their ropes and their rods were thrown, and seemed to move about like snakes. So realistic was the effect that even Moses felt the least bit of doubt in his own mind. He of course had no tricks, and he relied entirely on God.

2590. The concerted attack of evil is sometimes so well contrived from all points that falsehood appears and is acclaimed as the truth. The believer of truth is isolated, and a sort of moral dizziness creeps over his mind. But by God's grace Faith asserts itself, gives him confidence, and points out the specific truths which will dissipate and destroy the teeming brood of falsehood.

2591. The meaning may be either (1) that falsehood and trickery may have their day, but they cannot win everywhere, especially in the presence of Truth, or (2) that trickery and magic must come to an evil end.

2592. Cf. this passage with vii. 120-126 and the notes thereon.

2593. Pharaoh accuses his sorcerers who have been converted, of having been in league with Moses all the time, and in fact of having been led and taught by him! So arrogance and evil cannot conceive of God's worlds and worlds of beauty and truth beyond its own narrow vision! It is truly blind, and its very cleverness deludes it to wander far from the truth!

Your hands and feet  
On opposite sides, and I  
Will have you crucified  
On trunks of palm-trees:  
So shall ye know for certain,  
Which of us can give  
The more severe and the more  
Lasting Punishment!"

72. They said: "Never shall we  
Regard thee as more than  
The Clear Signs <sup>2594</sup> that have  
Come to us, or than  
Him Who created us!  
So decree whatever thou  
Desirest to decree: for thou  
Canst only decree (touching)  
The life of this world. <sup>2595</sup>

73. "For us, we have believed  
In our Lord: may He  
Forgive us our faults,  
And the magic to which  
Thou didst compel us: <sup>2596</sup>  
For God is Best  
And Most Abiding."

74. Verily he who comes <sup>2597</sup>  
To his Lord as a sinner  
(At Judgment),—for him  
Is Hell: therein shall he  
Neither live nor die.

أَيُّدِيكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُمْ مِنْ خِلَافٍ  
وَلَا وَصَلَيْتُكُمْ فِي جُذُوعِ النَّخْلِ  
وَلَتَعْلَمُنَ أَيُّنَا أَشَدُّ  
عَذَابًا وَأَبْقَى ○

٤٢- قالوا لن نؤثرَكَ عَلَى  
مَا جَاءَنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ  
وَالَّذِي فَطَرَنَا  
فَاقْضِ مَا أَنْتَ قَاضٍ  
إِنَّمَا تَقْضِي هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا ○

٤٣- إِنَّا أَمَنَّا بِرَبِّنَا  
لِيَغْفِرَ لَنَا خَطِيئَاتِنَا وَمَا أَكْثَرُ هُنَا عَلَيْكَ  
مِنَ السِّحْرِ  
وَاللَّهُ خَدِيرٌ وَأَبْقَى ○

٤٤- إِنَّهُ مَنْ يَأْتِ رَبَّهُ مُجْرِمًا فَإِنَّ لَهُ  
جَهَنَّمَ لَا يَمُوتُ فِيهَا وَلَا يَحْيَى ○

2594. *Clear Signs*: the miracles, the personality of the Messengers of God, the logic of events as they unfolded themselves, and the light of inner conviction in their own conscience. There are in addition the Signs and Proofs of God in nature, which are referred to in many places, e.g., xx. 53-54.

2595. Thus was the first part of the mission of Moses—that to the Egyptians—fulfilled. See n. 1083 to vii. 126; also Appendix V, to S. vii.

2596. The magic, mummy, and deceptions which pertained to Egyptian Pagan religion became a creed, a State article of faith, to which all citizens were compelled to bow, and which its priests were compelled actively to practise. And Pharaoh was at the head of the whole system—the high priest or the supreme god. With justice, therefore, do the converted magicians lay the blame on Pharaoh, effectively negativing Pharaoh's disingenuous charge that they had been in league with Moses.

These falsehoods and deceptions—combined in many cases with horrid cruelties, open and secret, were common to many Pagan systems. Some of them have been investigated in detail in Sir John G. Frazer's *Golden Bough*.

2597. The verses xx. 74-76 are better construed as comments on the story of the converted Egyptians who had "purified themselves (from evil)". But some construe them as a continuation of their speech.

75. But such as come  
To Him as Believers  
Who have worked righteous  
deeds,—  
For them are ranks exalted,—

٥٠. وَمَنْ يَأْتِهِ مُؤْمِنًا قَدْ عَمِلَ الصَّالِحَاتِ  
فَأُولَئِكَ لَهُمُ الدَّرَجَاتُ الْعُلَى ۝

76. Gardens of Eternity,  
Beneath which flow rivers:  
They will dwell therein  
For aye: such is the reward  
Of those who purify  
Themselves (from evil).<sup>2598</sup>

٥١. جَنَّاتٌ عَذْنٌ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ  
خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ۚ  
وَذَٰلِكَ جَزَاءُ مَنْ تَزَكَّى ۝

- C. 145.—The people of Israel were rescued from bondage  
(xx. 77-104.) And led on their way to the Promised Land.  
God's Grace gave them light and guidance, but they  
Rebelled under the leadership of one  
Called the Sāmīri: he melted the gold  
Of their jewels and made an idol—a calf  
For their worship—a thing without life or power.  
Moses destroyed the idol, and cursed  
The man who led the people astray.

#### SECTION 4.

77. ~~We~~ We sent an inspiration<sup>2599</sup>  
To Moses: "Travel by night  
With My servants, and strike  
A dry path for them  
Through the sea, without fear  
Of being overtaken (by Pharaoh),  
And without (any other) fear."

٥٢. وَلَقَدْ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ أَنِ  
اصْرَبْ بِعَبَادِي فَاحْرِبْ لَهُمْ طَرِيقًا  
فِي الْبَحْرِ يَبَسًا ۚ  
لَا تَخَفْ دَرَكًا وَلَا مَخْشَىٰ ۝

78. Then Pharaoh pursued them  
With his forces, but  
The waters completely  
overwhelmed  
Them and covered them up.

٥٣. فَاتَّبَعَهُمْ فِرْعَوْنُ بِجُنُودِهِ  
فَغَشَّيَهُمْ مِنْ آلَافٍ مِمَّا عَشِيَ لَهُمْ ۝

79. Pharaoh led his people astray  
Instead of leading them aright.<sup>2600</sup>

٥٤. وَأَضَلَّ فِرْعَوْنُ قَوْمَهُ وَهَدَىٰ ۝

2598. As the Egyptian magicians had done when they confessed the One True God.

2599. Time passes, and at last Moses is commanded to leave Egypt with his people by night. They were to cross the Red Sea into the Sinai Peninsula. They were told to have no fear of Pharaoh or of the sea or of the unknown desert country of Sinai into which they were going. They crossed dry-shod, while Pharaoh who came in pursuit with his troops was overwhelmed by the sea. He and his men all perished. There is no emphasis on this episode here. But the emphasis is laid on the hard task which Moses had with his own people after he had delivered them from the Egyptian bondage.

2600. It is the duty of kings and leaders to give the right lead to their people. Instead of that, the evil ones among them lead them astray and are the cause of the whole of the people perishing.

80. **Ye Children of Israel!**  
We delivered you from  
Your enemy, and We  
Made a Covenant with you  
On the right side of <sup>2601</sup>  
Mount (Sinai), and We sent  
Down to you Manna  
And quails:

٨٠- يَسْمِعِي إِسْرَائِيلَ قَدْ أَنْجَيْنَاكَ مِنْ  
عَدُوِّكَمْ وَوَعَدْناكُمْ  
جَانِبَ الطُّورِ الْأَيْمَنِ  
وَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَنَّاءَ وَالسَّلَوى

81. (Saying): "Eat of the good <sup>2602</sup>  
Things We have provided  
For your sustenance, but  
Commit no excess therein,  
Lest My Wrath should justly  
Descend on you: and those  
On whom descends My Wrath  
Do perish indeed!" <sup>2603</sup>

٨١- كُلُوا مِنْ طَيِّبَاتِ  
مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ وَلَا تَطْغَوْا فِيهِ  
فَيَحْبِلَ عَلَيْكُمْ غَضَبِي  
وَمَنْ يُغْلَبْ عَلَيْهِ غَضَبِي فَقَدْ هَوَى

82. "But, without doubt, I am  
(Also) He that forgives  
Again and again, to those,  
Who repent, believe,  
And do right,—who,  
In fine, are ready to receive  
True guidance."

٨٢- وَإِلَيَّ لَعُفَاؤُ  
لِمَنْ تَابَ وَآمَنَ  
وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا ثُمَّ اهْتَدَى

83. **When Moses was up on the**  
<sup>Mount,</sup> <sup>2604</sup>  
God said:) "What made thee  
Hasten in advance of thy people,  
O Moses?"

٨٣- وَمَا أَجْعَلَكَ  
عَنْ قَوْمِكَ يَمُوسَى

84. He replied: "Behold, they are  
Close on my footsteps:

٨٤- قَالَ هُمْ أُولَاءِ عَلَى أَثَرِي

2601. *Right side*: Cf. xix. 52, and n. 2504, towards the end. The Arabian side of Sinai (Jabal Mûsa) was the place where Moses first received his commission before going to Egypt, and also where he received the Law after the Exodus from Egypt.

2602. Cf. ii. 57 and n. 71; and vii. 160. I should like to construe this not only literally but also metaphorically. 'God has looked after you and saved you. He has given you ethical and spiritual guidance. Enjoy the fruits of all this, but do not become puffed up and rebellious (another meaning in the root *ṭaḡḡa*); otherwise the Wrath of God is sure to descend on you.'

2603. This gives the key-note to Moses's constant tussle with his own people, and introduces immediately afterwards the incident of the golden calf.

2604. This was when Moses was up on the Mount for forty days and forty nights: ii. 51, and n. 66. Moses had left the elders of Israel with Aaron behind him: Exod. xxiv. 14. While he was in a state of ecstatic honour on the Mount, his people were enacting strange scenes down below. They were tested and tried, and they failed in the trial. They made a golden image of a calf for worship, as described below. See also vii. 148-150 and notes.

I hastened to Thee,  
O my Lord,  
To please Thee."

85. (God) said: "We have tested  
Thy people in thy absence:  
The Sāmīrī has led them<sup>2605</sup>  
Astray."

86. So Moses returned to his people  
In a state of indignation  
And sorrow. He said:  
"O my people! did not  
Your Lord make a handsome<sup>2606</sup>  
Promise to you? Did then  
The promise seem to you  
Long (in coming)? Or did ye  
Desire that Wrath should  
Descend from your Lord on you,  
And so ye broke your promise  
To me?"

87. They said: "We broke not  
The promise to thee, as far  
As lay in our power:  
But we were made to carry  
The weight of the ornaments<sup>2607</sup>  
Of the (whole) people, and we

وَجَعَلْتُ إِلَيْكَ رَبِّ لِتَرْضَى ○

هـ-قَالَ فَإِنَّا قَدْ فَتَنَّا قَوْمَكَ مِنْ بَعْدِكَ  
وَاضَلَّهُمُ السَّامِرِيُّ ○

هـ-قَرَّبَ مُوسَى إِلَى قَوْمِهِ غَضَبَانَ  
أَسْفَاةً قَالَ يَقْتُلُوا النَّفْسَ  
يَعِدُكُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ وَعَدًا حَسَنًا  
أَفْطَأَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْعَهْدَ أَمْ  
أَرَدْتُمْ أَنْ يَحْمِلَ عَلَيْكُمُ غَضَبٌ مِمَّنْ  
رَبِّكُمْ فَآخَرَفْتُمْ مَوْعِدِي ○

هـ-قَالُوا مَا أَخْلَفْنَا مَوْعِدَكَ بِمَلَكِنَا  
وَلَكِنَّا خَمَلْنَا  
أَوْثَارًا مِمَّنْ زِينَةَ الْقَوْمِ

2605. Who was this Sāmīrī? If it was his personal name, it was sufficiently near the meaning of the original root-word to have the definite article attached to it: Cf. the name of the Khalifa Mu'tasim (Al-Mu'tasim). What was the root for "Sāmīrī"? If we look to old Egyptian, we have *Shemer* = a stranger, foreigner (Sir E. A. Wallis Budge's *Egyptian Hieroglyphic Dictionary*, 1920, p. 815 b). As the Israelites had just left Egypt, they might quite well have among them an Egyptianised Hebrew bearing that nickname. That the name *Shemer* was subsequently not unknown among the Hebrews is clear from the Old Testament. In I Kings, xvi, 24 we read that Omri, king of Israel, the northern portion of the divided kingdom, who reigned about 903-896 B. C., built a new city, Samaria, on a hill which he bought from Shemer, the owner of the hill, for two talents of silver. See also Renan: *History of Israel*, II. 210. For a further discussion of the word, see n. 2608 below.

2606. There are two promises referred to in this verse, the promise of God and the promise of the people of Israel. They form one Covenant, which was entered into through their leader Moses. See xx. 80, and ii. 63, n. 78. God's promise was to protect them and lead them to the Promised Land, and their promise was to obey God's Law and His commandments.

2607. Cf. Exod. xii, 35-36: the Israelites, before they left Egypt, borrowed from the Egyptians "jewels of silver and jewels of gold, and raiment"; and "they spoiled the Egyptians" i.e., stripped them of all their valuable jewellery. Note that the answer of the backsliders is disingenuous in various ways. (1) The Sāmīrī was no doubt responsible for suggesting the making of the golden calf, but they could not on that account disclaim responsibility for themselves: the burden of the sin is on him who commits it, and he cannot pretend that he was powerless to avoid it. (2) At most the weight of the gold they carried could not have been heavy even if one or two men carried it, but would have been negligible if distributed. (3) Gold is valuable, and it is not likely that if they wanted to disburden themselves of it, they had any need to light a furnace, melt it, and cast it into the shape of a calf.



Threw them (into the fire),  
And that was what  
The Sāmīri suggested.<sup>2608</sup>

88. "Then he brought out  
(Of the fire) before the (people)  
The image of a calf:<sup>2609</sup>  
It seemed to low:<sup>2610</sup>  
So they said: 'This is  
Your god, and the god  
Of Moses, but (Moses)  
Has forgotten |' "<sup>2611</sup>

89. Could they not see that  
It could not return them  
A word (for answer), and that  
It had no power either  
To harm them or  
To do them good?<sup>2612</sup>

#### SECTION 5.

90. Aaron had already, before this,  
Said to them: "O my people!  
Ye are being tested in this:<sup>2613</sup>  
For verily your Lord is (God)  
Most Gracious: so follow me  
And obey my command."<sup>2614</sup>

فَقَدْ فُتِنَا بِكَ أَلْفَى السَّامِرِيِّ ۝

هَمْ فَأَخْرَجَ لَهُمْ  
عِجْلًا جَسَدًا لَهُ خَوَارٍ  
فَقَالُوا هَذَا إِلَهُكُمْ  
وَاللهُ مُوسَى فَنَسِيَ ۝

٨٩- أَفَلَا يَرَوْنَ أَلَّا يَرْجِعُ إِلَيْهِمْ قَوْلًا  
وَلَا يَنْفَعُ لَهُمْ  
طَرًا وَلَا نَفْعًا ۝

٩٠- وَلَقَدْ قَالَ لَهُمْ هَارُونُ مِنْ قَبْلُ  
يَقُومُوا لَنَا فَنُتَنِّمَهُمْ ۖ وَإِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ  
الرَّحْمَنُ فَاسْتَعِينُوا بِأَمْرِى ۝

2608. See n. 2605 about the Sāmīri. If the Egyptian origin of the root is not accepted, we have a Hebrew origin in "Shomer" a guard, watchman, sentinel; allied to the Arabic *Samara, yasmuru*, to keep awake by night, to converse by night; *samīr*, one who keeps awake by night. The Sāmīri may have been a watchman, in fact or by nickname.

2609. See n. 1113 to vii. 148, where the same words are used and explained.

2610. See n. 1114 to vii. 148.

2611. *Moses has forgotten*: i.e., 'forgotten both us and his god. He has been gone for so many days. He is searching for a god on the Mount when his god is really here!' This is spoken by the Sāmīri and his partisans, but the people as a whole accepted it, and it therefore becomes their speech.

2612. This is a parenthetical comment. How blind the people were! They had seen Signs of the true living God, and yet they were willing to worship this dead image! The true living God had spoken in definite words of command, while this calf could only emit some sounds of lowing, which were themselves contrived by the fraud of the priests. This image could do neither good nor harm, while God was the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Universe, Whose Mercy was unbounded and Whose Wrath was terrible.

2613. "Resist this temptation: you are being tested in this. Do not follow after the semi-Egyptian Sāmīri, but obey me."

2614. The Bible story makes Aaron the culprit, which is inconsistent with his office as the high priest of God and the right hand of Moses. See n. 1116 to vii. 150. Our version is more consistent, and explains in the Sāmīri the lingering influences of the Egyptian cult of Osiris the bull-god.

91. They had said : <sup>2615</sup> " We will not  
Abandon this cult, but we  
Will devote ourselves to it  
Until Moses returns to us." <sup>2616</sup>

٩١- قَالُوا لَنْ نَدْرِكَ عَلَيْهِ حَكِيمِينَ  
حَتَّى يَرْجِعَ إِلَيْنَا مُوسَى ○

92. (Moses) said : " O Aaron !  
What kept thee back, when  
Thou sawest them going wrong,

٩٢- قَالَ يَلْهَوْنَ مَا مَنَعَكَ  
إِذْ رَأَيْتَهُمْ ضَلُّوا ○

93. " From following me ? Didst thou  
Then disobey my order ? " <sup>2617</sup>

٩٣- أَلَا تَتَّبِعَنِ أَفَعَصَيْتَ أَمْرِي ○

94. (Aaron) replied : " O son  
Of my mother ! Seize (me) not  
By my beard nor by  
(The hair of) my head ! <sup>2618</sup>  
Truly I feared lest thou  
Shouldst say, ' Thou hast caused  
A division among the Children  
Of Israel, and thou didst not  
Respect my word ! ' " <sup>2619</sup>

٩٤- قَالَ يَبْنَؤُكُمْ لَا تُأْخِذْ  
بِبِلْعَتِي وَلَا بِرَأْسِي  
إِنِّي خَشِيتُ أَنْ تَقُولَ  
فَرَّقْتُ بَيْنَ بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ  
وَلَمْ تَرْقُبْ قَوْلِي ○

95. (Moses) said : " What then  
Is thy case, O Samiri ? " <sup>2620</sup>

٩٥- قَالَ فَمَا خَطْبُكَ يَا سَامِرِيُّ ○

96. He replied : " I saw what  
They saw not : so I took

٩٦- قَالَ بَصُرْتُ بِمَا لَمْ يَبْصُرُوا بِهِ فَقَبَضْتُ

2615. Obviously Aaron's speech in the last verse, and the rebels' defiance in this verse, were spoken before the return of Moses from the Mount.

2616. The rebels had so little faith that they had given Moses up for lost, and never expected to see him again,

2617. Moses, when he came back, was full of anger and grief. His speech to Aaron is one of rebuke, and he was also inclined to handle him roughly : see next verse. The order he refers to is that stated in vii. 142, " Act for me amongst my people : do right, and follow not the way of those who do mischief ".

2618. Cf. vii. 150.

2619. This reply of Aaron's is in no way inconsistent with the reply as noted in vii. 150. On the contrary there is a dramatic aptness in the different points emphasised on each occasion. In S. vii., we were discussing the Ummat of Israel, and Aaron rightly says, " The people did indeed reckon me as naught, and went near to slaying me ! " In adding, " Let not the enemies rejoice over my misfortune " he is referring by implication to his brother's wish to maintain unity among the people. Here the unity is the chief point to emphasise : we are dealing with the Samiri as mischief-monger, and he could best be dealt with by Moses, who proceeds to do so.

2620. Moses now turns to the Samiri, and the Samiri's reply in the next verse sums up his character in a few wonderful strokes of character-painting. The lesson of the whole of this episode is the fall of a human soul that nominally comes to God's Truth in a humble position but makes mischief when and as it finds occasion. It is no less dangerous and culpable than the arrogant soul, typified by Pharaoh, which gets into high places and makes its leadership the cause of ruin to a whole nation.

A handful (of dust) from  
The footprint of the Apostle,  
And threw it (into the calf) :  
Thus did my soul suggest  
To me." <sup>2621</sup>

كِبْشَةً مِنْ أَكْبَرِ الرُّسُولِ  
فَنَبَذْتُهَا وَكَذَلِكَ سَوَّكْتُ لِي نَفْسِي ٥

97. (Moses) said : " Get thee gone !  
But thy (punishment) in this life  
Will be that thou wilt say,  
' Touch me not ' ; and moreover  
(For a future penalty) thou hast  
A promise that will not fail : <sup>2623</sup>  
Now look at thy god,  
Of whom thou hast become  
A devoted worshipper :  
We will certainly (melt) it  
In a blazing fire and scatter  
It broadcast in the sea ! " <sup>2624</sup>

٩٠- قَالَ فَادْهَبْ فَإِنَّ لَكَ فِي الْحَيَاةِ  
أَنْ تَقُولَ لَا مِسَاسَ  
وَإِنَّ لَكَ مَوْعِدًا لَنْ تُخْلَفَهُ  
وَانْظُرْ إِلَى إِلَهِكَ الَّذِي  
ظَلَمْتَ عَلَيْهِ عَاكِمًا  
لِخُرُوجِهِ لَوْلَا نَسَفْتُهُ فِي الْيَمِّ نَسْفًا ٥

2621. This answer of the Sāmīri is a fine example of unblushing effrontery, careful evasion of issues, and invented falsehoods. He takes upon himself to pretend that he had far more insight than anybody else : he saw what the vulgar crowd did not see. He saw something supernatural. "The Apostle" is construed by many Commentators to mean the angel Gabriel. *Rasul* (plural, *rusul*) is used in several places for "angels" : e.g., in xi, 69, 77 ; xix, 19 ; and xxxv, 1. But if we take it to mean the Apostle Moses, it means that the Sāmīri saw something sacred or supernatural in his footprints ; perhaps he thinks a little flattery would make Moses forgive him. The dust became sacred, and his throwing it into the calf's image made the calf utter a lowing sound ! As if that was the point at issue ! He does not answer the charge of making an image for worship. But finally, with arrogant effrontery, he says, " Well, that is what my soul suggested to me, and that should be enough ! "

2622. He and his kind were to become social lepers, untouchables ; perhaps also sufficiently arrogant to hold others at arm's length, and say " *Noli me tangere* " (touch me not).

2623. Namely, the promised Wrath of God : see xx, 81 ; lxxxix, 25.

2624. The cast effigy was re-melted and destroyed. Thus ends the Sāmīri's story, of which the lessons are indicated in n. 2620 above. It may be interesting to pursue the transformations of the word Sāmīri in later times. For its origin see notes 2605 and 2608 above. Whether the root of Sāmīri was originally Egyptian or Hebrew does not affect the later history. Four facts may be noted. (1) There was a man bearing a name of that kind at the time of Moses, and he led a revolt against Moses and was cursed by Moses. (2) In the time of King Omri (903-896 B.C.) of the northern kingdom of Israel, there was a man called Shemer, from whom, according to the Bible, was bought a hill on which was built the new capital of the kingdom, the town of Samaria. (3) The name of the hill was *Shomer* (=watchman, vigilant guardian), and that form of the name also appears as the name of a man (see II Kings xii, 21) ; some authorities think the town was called after the hill and not after the man (Hastings's *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*), but this is for our present purposes immaterial. (4) There was and is a dissenting community of Israelites called Samaritans, who have their own separate Pentateuch and Targum, who claim to be the true Children of Israel, and who hold the Orthodox Jews in contempt as the latter hold them in contempt ; they claim to be the true guardians (*Shomerim*) of the Law, and that is probably the true origin of the name Samaritan, which may go further back in time than the foundation of the town of Samaria. I think it probable that the schism originated from the time of Moses, and that the curse of Moses on the Sāmīri explains the position.

98. But the God of you all  
Is the One God: there is  
No god but He: all things  
He comprehends in His knowledge.
99. Thus do We relate to thee  
Some stories of what happened  
Before: for We have sent  
Thee a Message from  
Our own Presence.<sup>2625</sup>
100. If any do turn away  
Therefrom, verily they will  
Bear a burden  
On the Day of Judgment;
101. They will abide in this (state):  
And grievous will the burden<sup>2626</sup>  
Be to them on that Day,—
102. The Day when the Trumpet  
Will be sounded: that Day,  
We shall gather the sinful,  
Blear-eyed (with terror).<sup>2627</sup>
103. In whispers will they consult  
Each other: "Ye tarried not  
Longer than ten (Days);"<sup>2628</sup>
104. We know best what they  
Will say, when their leader<sup>2629</sup>
- ٩٨-إِنَّمَا إِلَهُكُمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا  
هُوَ وَسِعَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا ۝
- ٩٩-كَذَلِكَ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ مَا  
قَدْ سَبَقَ ۚ  
وَقَدْ آتَيْنَكَ مِنْ لَدُنَّا ذِكْرًا ۖ
- ١٠٠-مَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَنْهُ فَإِنَّهُ  
يَحْمِلُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ وِزْرًا ۖ
- ١٠١-خَالِدِينَ فِيهِ ۖ  
وَسَاءَ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ حِمْلًا ۖ
- ١٠٢-يَوْمَ يُنْفَخُ فِي الصُّورِ  
وَنُحْشِرُ الْبَاجِرِينَ يَوْمِئِذٍ زُرْقًا ۖ
- ١٠٣-يَتَخَفَتُونَ بَيْنَهُمْ إِنْ لَبِثْتُمْ  
إِلَّا عَشْرًا ۖ
- ١٠٤-نَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَقُولُونَ إِذْ يَقُولُ أَمْثَلُهُمْ

2625. Thus superseding previous revelations; for this (the Qur-ān) is direct from God, and is not a second-hand exposition on other men's authority.

2626. Cf. vi. 31. If people are so immersed in the evanescent falsehoods of this life as to turn away from the True and the Eternal, they will have a rude awakening when the Judgment comes. These very things that they thought so enjoyable here—taking advantage of others, material self-indulgence, nursing grievances instead of doing good, etc., etc.—will be a grievous burden to them that day, which they will not be able to escape or lighten.

2627. *Zurq*—having eyes different from the normal colour, which in the East is black and white; having blue eyes, or eyes afflicted with dimness or blindness, or squint; hence metaphorically, blear-eyed (with terror).

2628. Faced with eternity they will realise that their life on this earth, or the interval between their sin and their punishment, had a duration which practically amounted to nothing. They express this by the phrase "ten days", but their wiser heads think that even this is an over-estimate. It was but a brief day!

2629. Cf. xx. 63 and n. 2587. Note that it is the shrewdest among the sinners who will say this, because he will be the first to see the true situation.

Most eminent for shrewdness  
Will say: "Ye tarried not  
Longer than a Day!"

طَرِيقَةً إِنْ لَيْسَتْ إِلَّا يَوْمًا ۝

- C. 146.— Such is the lure of Evil: but high.  
(xx. 105-135.) And low will be levelled on the Day  
Of Judgment, before the Eternal, the Gracious,  
The King, the Truth, who sends the Qur-ān  
To teach and to warn. Will man remember  
How Adam's arch-enemy, Satan, caused  
His fall, and will he yet be blind  
To the Signs of God? Nay,—but let  
Not Evil make you impatient: the Prize  
Of the Hereafter is better than aught  
Of the glitter of this life: wait in Faith,  
And the End will show the triumph  
Of Truth, Goodness, and Righteousness.

#### SECTION 6.

105. They ask thee concerning <sup>2630</sup>  
The Mountains: say, "My Lord  
Will uproot them and scatter  
Them as dust;" <sup>2631</sup>

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْجِبَالِ فَقُلْ  
يَنْسِفُهَا رَبِّي نَسْفًا ۝

106. "He will leave them as plains  
Smooth and level;

۝ فَيَذَرُهَا قَاعًا صَفْصَفًا ۝

107. "Nothing crooked or curved  
Wilt thou see in their place."

۝ لَا تَرَىٰ فِيهَا عِوَجًا وَلَا أَمْتًا ۝

108. On that Day will they follow  
The Caller <sup>2632</sup> (straight): no  
crookedness

۝ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَتَّبِعُونَ الدَّاعِيَ لَا عِوَجَ لَهُ ۝

2630. In the last verse, it was the deceptiveness and relativity of Time that was dealt with. Here we come to the question of space, solidity, bulk. The question was actually put to the holy Prophet: what will become of the solid Mountains, or in the English phrase, "the eternal hills"? They are no more substantial than anything else in this temporal world. When the "new world" (xiii. 5) of which Unbelievers doubted, is actually in being, the mountains will cease to exist. We can imagine the scene of judgment as a level plain, in which there are no ups and downs and no places of concealment. All is straight and level, without corners, mysteries, or lurking doubts.

2631. The one word *nasaḥa* carries the ideas of (1) tearing up by the roots, (2) scattering like chaff or dust, and (3) winnowing. Its twofold repetition here intensifies its meaning.

2632. *The Caller*: the angel whose voice will call and direct all souls. Gabriel will call, when *Isrāʾīl* has sounded the Trumpet.

(Can they show) him : all  
sounds<sup>2633</sup>  
Shall humble themselves in  
The Presence of (God) Most  
Gracious :  
Nothing shalt thou hear  
But the tramp of their feet  
(As they march).

وَحَشَعَتِ الْأَصْوَاتُ  
لِلْمُرْحَن  
فَلَا تَسْمَعُ  
إِلَّا هَيْسًا ○

109. On that Day shall no  
Intercession avail  
Except for those for whom<sup>2634</sup>  
Permission has been granted  
By (God) Most Gracious  
And whose word is  
Acceptable to Him.

١٠٩-يَوْمَئِذٍ لَا تَنْفَعُ الشَّفَاعَةُ  
إِلَّا مَنْ أَذِنَ لَهُ الرَّحْمَنُ  
وَرَضِيَ لَهُ قَوْلًا ○

110. He knows what (appears  
To His creatures as) before  
Or after or behind them :<sup>2635</sup>  
But they shall not compass it  
With their knowledge.

١١٠-يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ  
وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ  
وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِهِ عِلْمًا ○

111. (All) faces shall be humbled  
Before (Him)—the Living,  
The Self-Subsisting, Eternal :  
Hopeless indeed will be  
The man that carries  
Iniquity (on his back),<sup>2636</sup>

١١١-وَعَنَتِ الْوُجُوهُ  
لِلْحَيِّ الْقَيُّومِ  
وَقَدْ خَابَ مِنْ حَمَلِ ظُلْمًا ○

2633. A beautiful personification of Sound. First there is the loud blast of the Trumpet; then there is the soft angelic Voice calling "Arise". Then there is the stillness and hush of awe and reverence: only the tramp of the ranks marching along will be heard.

2634. Cf. ii. 255 in the Verse of the Throne. Here *man* is in the accusative case governed by *tanja'u*, and it is better to construe as I have done. That is, intercession will benefit no one except those for whom God has granted permission, and whose word (of repentance) is true and sincere, and therefore acceptable to God. Others construe: no intercession will avail, except by those to whom God has granted permission, and whose word (of intercession) is acceptable to God. In that case the two distinct clauses have no distinct meanings.

2635. Cf. ii. 255, and n. 297. The slight difference in phraseology (which I have tried to preserve in the Translation) will be understood as a beauty when we reflect that here our attention is directed to the Day of Judgment, and in ii. 255 the wording is general, and applies to our present state also.

2636. The metaphor of the burden of sin which the unjust carry on their backs is referred to in xx. 100-101 (see n. 2626), in vi 31, and in other passages. Note that *all* faces, those of the just as well as of the unjust, will be humble before God: the best of us can claim no merit equal to God's Grace. But the just will have Hope: while the unjust, now that the curtain of Reality has risen, will be in absolute Despair!

112. But he who works deeds  
Of righteousness, and has faith,  
Will have no fear of harm  
Nor of any curtailment<sup>2637</sup>  
(Of what is his due).

113. Thus have We sent this  
Down—an Arabic Qur-an—  
And explained therein in detail  
Some of the warnings,  
In order that they may  
Fear God, or that it may  
Cause their remembrance of  
Him.<sup>2638</sup>

114. High above all is God,  
The King, the Truth!  
Be not in haste  
With the Qur-an before  
Its revelation to thee<sup>2639</sup>  
Is completed, but say,  
"O my Lord! advance me  
In knowledge."

115. We had already, beforehand,<sup>2640</sup>  
Taken the covenant of Adam,

۱۱۲- وَ مَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِنَ الصَّالِحَاتِ وَهُوَ  
مُؤْمِنٌ

فَلَا يَخَفُ ظُلْمًا وَلَا هَضْمًا ۝

۱۱۳- وَكَذَلِكَ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا  
وَصَرَّفْنَا فِيهِ مِنَ الْوَعِيدِ

لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ

أَوْ يُحَذِّرُ لَهُمْ ذِكْرًا ۝

۱۱۴- تَعَالَى اللَّهُ الْمَلِكُ الْحَقُّ ۝

وَلَا تَجْعَلْ بِالْقُرْآنِ مِنْ قَبْلِ

أَنْ يُفْضَى إِلَيْكَ وَحْيُهُ وَقُلْ

رَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا ۝

۱۱۵- وَلَقَدْ عَهِدْنَا إِلَى آدَمَ مِنْ قَبْلِ

2637. See the last note: "Unlike the unjust, the righteous, who have come with Faith, will now find their Faith justified: not only will they be free from any fear of harm, but they will be rewarded to the full, or, as has been said in other passages, where His bounty rather than His justice is emphasised, they will get more than their due reward (iii, 27; xxxix. 10).

2638. The Qur-an is in clear Arabic, so that even an unlearned people like the Arabs might understand and profit by its warnings, and the rest of the world may learn through them, as they did in the first few centuries of Islam and may do again when we Muslims show ourselves worthy to explain and exemplify its meaning. The evil are warned that they may repent; the good are confirmed in their Faith and strengthened by their remembrance of Him.

2639. God is above every human event or desire. His purpose is universal. But He is the Truth, the absolute Truth; and His kingdom is the true kingdom, that can carry out its will. That Truth unfolds itself gradually, as it did in the gradual revelation of the Qur-an to the holy Apostle. But even after it was completed in a volume, its true meaning and purpose only gradually unfold themselves to any given individual or nation. No one should be impatient about it. On the contrary, we should always pray for increase in our own knowledge, which can never at any given moment be complete.

2640. The spiritual fall of two individual souls, Pharaoh and the Sāmiri, having been referred to, the one through overweening arrogance, and the other through a spirit of mischief and false harking back to the past, our attention is now called to the prototype of Evil who tempted Adam, the original Man, and to the fact that though man was clearly warned that Evil is his enemy and will only effect his ruin, he showed so little firmness that he succumbed to it at once at the first opportunity.

But he forgot: and We found  
On his part no firm resolve.

#### SECTION 7.

116. ~~When~~ When We said to the angels,  
"Prostrate yourselves to Adam",  
They prostrated themselves, but  
not

Iblis: he refused.

117. Then We said: "O Adam!  
Verily, this is an enemy  
To thee and thy wife:  
So let him not get you  
Both out of the Garden,  
So that thou art landed  
In misery."<sup>2641</sup>

118. "There is therein (enough  
provision)  
For thee not to go hungry"<sup>2642</sup>  
Nor to go naked,

119. "Nor to suffer from thirst,  
Nor from the sun's heat."

120. But Satan whispered evil  
To him: he said, "O Adam!  
Shall I lead thee to  
The Tree of Eternity"<sup>2643</sup>  
And to a kingdom  
That never decays?"

فَنَسِيَ وَلَمْ نَجِدْ لَهُ عَزْمًا ۝

۱۱۶- وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ  
فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ أَبَى ۝

۱۱۷- فَقُلْنَا يَا آدَمُ إِنَّ هَذَا عَدُوُّكَ  
لَكَ وَلِزَوْجِكَ فَلَا تَخْرُجَا كُنَّا  
مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ فَتَشْقَى ۝

۱۱۸- إِنَّ لَكَ أَلًا  
تَجُوعٌ فِيهَا وَلَا تَعْرِى ۝

۱۱۹- وَ أَنتَ لَا تَطْمَئِنُّ فِيهَا وَلَا تَبْتَغَى ۝

۱۲۰- فَوَسَّوَسَ الْيَهُ الْشَّيْطَانُ قَالَ يَا آدَمُ  
هَلْ أَتَاكَ عَلَى شَجَرَةٍ الْمُلْكِ  
وَمُلْكٌ لَا يَبْئَلُ ۝

2641. See last note. The story is referred to, in order to draw attention to man's folly in rushing into the arms of Evil, though he had been clearly forewarned.

2642. Not only had the warning been given that Evil is an enemy to man and will effect his destruction but it was clearly pointed out that all his needs were being met in the Garden of Happiness. Food and clothing, drink and shelter, were amply provided for. By these terms we must understand, if the Garden was a spiritual Garden, also spiritual good: the things that feed the soul and make it glad, that give it an æsthetic sense of beauty and afford it shelter from extremes of passion or emotion.

2643. The suggestion of the Evil One is clever, as it always is: it is false, and at the same time plausible. It is false, because (1) that felicity was not temporary, like the life of this world, and (2) they were supreme in the Garden, and a "kingdom" such as was dangled before them would only add to their sorrows. It was plausible, because (1) nothing had been said to them about Eternity, as the opposite of Eternity was not yet known, and (2) the sweets of Power arise from the savour of Self, and Self is an alluring (if false) attraction that misleads the Will.



121. In the result, they both  
 Ate of the tree, and so  
 Their nakedness appeared <sup>2644</sup>  
 To them: they began to sew  
 Together, for their covering,  
 Leaves from the Garden:  
 Thus did Adam disobey  
 His Lord, and allow himself <sup>2645</sup>  
 To be seduced.

122. But his Lord chose him  
 (For His Grace): He turned  
 To him, and gave him guidance.

123. He said: "Get ye down,  
 Both of you, together," <sup>2646</sup>  
 From the Garden, with enmity  
 One to another: but if,  
 As is sure, there comes to you  
 Guidance from Me, whosoever  
 Follows My guidance, will not  
 Lose his way, nor fall <sup>2647</sup>  
 Into misery.

124. "But whosoever turns away"  
 From My Message, verily  
 For him is a life narrowed  
 Down, and We shall raise

١٢١- فَأَكَلَا مِنْهَا  
 فَبَدَتْ لَهُمَا سَوَاتُهُمَا  
 وَطَوَّقَا يَخْصِفْنَ عَلَيْهَا مِنْ وَرَقِ  
 الْجَنَّةِ  
 وَعَصَىٰ آدَمُ رَبَّهُ فَغَوَىٰ ۝

١٢٢- ثُمَّ اجْتَبَاهُ رَبُّهُ فَتَابَ  
 عَلَيْهِ وَهَدَىٰ ۝

١٢٣- قَالَ اهْبِطَا مِنْهَا جَمِيعًا  
 بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ  
 فَإِنَّمَا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِنِّي هُدًى  
 فَمَنِ اتَّبَعَ هُدَايَ  
 فَلَا يَضِلْ وَلَا يَشْغَىٰ ۝

١٢٤- وَمَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَن ذِكْرِي  
 فَإِنَّ لَهُ مَعِيشَةً ضَنْكًا وَنَحْشُرُهُ

2644. Hitherto they were clothed in the garb of Innocence and knew no evil. Now, when disobedience to God had sullied their soul and torn off the garment of their Innocence, their sullied Self appeared to themselves in all its nakedness and ugliness, and they had to resort to external things (leaves of the Garden) to cover the shame of their self-consciousness.

2645. Adam had been given the will to choose, and he chose wrong, and was about to be lost in the throng of the evil ones, when God's Grace came to his aid. His repentance was accepted, and God chose him for His Mercy, as stated in the next verse.

2646. The little variations between this passage and ii. 38 are instructive, as showing how clearly the particular argument is followed in each case. Here *ihbiṣṣā* ('get ye down') is in the dual number, and refers to the two individual souls, our common ancestors: in ii. 38 *ihbiṣṣū* is in the plural number, to include all mankind and Satan, for the argument is about the collective life of man.

2647. For the same reason as in the last note, we have here the consequences of Guidance to the individual, *viz.*: being saved from going astray or from falling into misery and despair. In ii. 38, the consequences expressed, though they apply to the individual, are also appropriate taken collectively: "on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve".

Him up blind on the Day <sup>2648</sup>  
Of Judgment."

125. He will say: "O my Lord!  
Why hast thou raised me  
Up blind, while I had  
Sight (before) ?" <sup>2649</sup>

126. (God) will say: "Thus  
Didst thou, when Our Signs  
Came unto thee, disregard  
Them: so wilt thou,  
This Day, be disregarded." <sup>2650</sup>

127. And thus do We recompense  
Him who transgresses beyond  
bounds  
And believes not in the Signs  
Of his Lord: and the Penalty  
Of the Hereafter is far more  
Grievous and more enduring. <sup>2651</sup>

128. Is it not a warning to such  
Men (to call to mind)  
How many generations before  
them  
We destroyed, in whose haunts  
They (now) move? Verily,  
In this are Signs for men  
Endued with understanding. <sup>2652</sup>

يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَعْمَى

١٢٥- قَالَ رَبِّ لِمَ حَضَرْتَنِي

أَعْمَى وَقَدْ كُنْتُ بَصِيرًا

١٢٦- قَالَ كَذَلِكَ أَتَتْكَ آيَاتُنَا فَنَسِيتَهَا

وَكَذَلِكَ الْيَوْمَ تُنسى

١٢٧- وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي مَنْ أَسْرَفَ

وَلَمْ يُؤْمَرْ بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِ

وَلَعَذَابُ الْآخِرَةِ أَشدُّ وَأَبْقَى

١٢٨- أَفَلَمْ يَهْدِ لَهُمْ

كَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُمْ مِنَ الْقُرُونِ

يَنْشُرُونَ فِي مَسْكِنِهِمْ

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّأُولِي النَّهْيِ

2648. Again, as in the last two verses, there is a variation from the previous passage (ii. 39). The consequences of the rejection of God's guidance are here expressed more individually: a life narrowed down, and a blindness that will persist beyond this life. "A life narrowed down" has many implications: (1) it is a life from which all the beneficent influences of God's wide world are excluded; (2) it is a life for Self, not for all; (3) in looking exclusively to the "good things" of this life, it misses the true Reality.

2649. Because God gave him physical sight in this life for trial, he thinks he should be favoured in the real world, the world that matters! He misused his physical sight and made himself blind for the other world.

2650. 'You were deliberately blind to God's Signs: now you will not see God's favours, and will be excluded from His Grace.'

2651. Blindness in the world of enduring Reality is far worse than physical blindness in the world of probation.

2652. Cf. xx. 54. This phrase concluded the argument of Moses with Pharaoh about Pharaoh's blindness to God and the Signs of God. Now it concludes the more general argument about men, concerning whom the saying arose: 'none are so blind as those who will not see.'

## SECTION 8

129. **Had** it not been  
For a Word that went forth  
Before from thy Lord,<sup>2653</sup>  
(Their punishment) must  
necessarily  
Have come; but there is  
A term appointed (for respite).

١٢٩- وَلَوْ لَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ  
مِنْ رَبِّكَ لَكَانَ لِزَامًا  
وَاجِبًا مُسْمًى ۝

130. Therefore be patient with what  
They say, and celebrate  
(constantly)<sup>2654</sup>  
The praises of thy Lord,  
Before the rising of the sun,  
And before its setting;  
Yea, celebrate them  
For part of the hours  
Of the night, and at the sides<sup>2655</sup>  
Of the day: that thou  
Mayest have (spiritual) joy.

١٣٠- فَاصْبِرْ عَلَىٰ مَا يَقُولُونَ وَسَبِّحْ  
بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ قَبْلَ طُلُوعِ الشَّمْسِ  
وَقَبْلَ غُرُوبِهَا  
وَمِنْ أَتَاكُمُ اللَّيْلُ فَسَبِّحْ وَأَطْرَافَ النَّهَارِ  
لَعَلَّكَ تَرْضَىٰ ۝

131. Nor strain thine eyes in longing  
For the things We have given  
For enjoyment to parties  
Of them, the splendour

١٣١- وَلَا تَذْكُنَّ عَيْنُكَ إِلَىٰ مَا مَتَّعْنَا بِهِ  
أَزْوَاجًا مِنْهُمْ زَهْرَةً

2653, Cf. x. 19 and n. 1407; also xi. 110. In God's holy Plan and Purpose, there is a wise adjustment of all interests, and a merciful chance and respite given to all, the unjust as well as the just, and His decree or word abides. The most wicked have a term appointed them for respite. Had it not been so, the punishment must necessarily have descended on them immediately for their evil deeds.

2654. All good men must be patient with what seems to them evil around them. That does not mean that they should sit still and do nothing to destroy evil; for the fight against evil is one of the cardinal points in Islam. What they are told is that they must not be impatient: they must pray to God and commune with Him, so that their patience and faith may be strengthened, and they may be able the better to grapple with evil. For they thus not only get strength but inward spiritual joy.

2655. *Taraf*, plural *atrāf*, may mean sides, ends, extremities. If the day be compared to a tubular figure standing erect, the top and bottom are clearly marked, but the sides are not so clearly marked: they would be *atrāf* (plural), not *tarāfa'in* (dual). Now the prayer before sunrise is clearly Fajr; that before sunset is 'Aḥr: "part of the hours of the night" would indicate Magrib (early night, just after sunset), and 'Ishā, before going to bed. There is left Zuhr, which is in the indefinite side or middle of the day: it may be soon after the sun's decline from noon, but there is considerable latitude about the precise hour. The majority of Commentators interpret in favour of the five Canonical prayers, and some include optional prayers. But I think the words are even more comprehensive, A good man's life is all one sweet Song of Praise to God.

Of the life of this world,  
Through which We test them :  
But the provision of thy Lord<sup>2656</sup>  
Is better and more enduring.

الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا لَفَنَفْتَةٍ لَّهُمْ فِيهَا  
وَرِزْقٌ رَاقٍ رَاقٍ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَى ○

132. Enjoin prayer on thy people,  
And be constant therein.  
We ask thee not to provide<sup>2657</sup>  
Sustenance : We provide it  
For thee. But the (fruit of)  
The Hereafter is for  
Righteousness.

١٣٢- وَأْمُرْ أَهْلَكَ بِالصَّلَاةِ وَاصْطَبِرْ عَلَيْهَا  
لَا تَسْأَلُكَ رِزْقًا ۖ نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُكَ  
وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلتَّقْوَى ○

133. They say : " Why does he  
not<sup>2658</sup>  
Bring us a Sign from  
His Lord ? " Has not  
A Clear Sign come to them  
Of all that was  
In the former Books  
Of revelation ?

١٣٣- وَقَالُوا لَوْلَا  
يَأْتِينَنَا بِآيَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّهِ  
أَوَلَمْ نَأْتِهِمْ بَيِّنَاتٍ  
مِنْ فِي الضُّعُفِ الْأُولَى ○

134. And if We had inflicted  
On them a penalty before this,<sup>2659</sup>  
They would have said :  
" Our Lord ! If only Thou  
Hadst sent us an apostle,  
We should certainly have followed

١٣٤- وَلَوْ أَنَّا أَهْلَكْنَاهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ مِنْ  
قَبْلِهِ لَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا لَوْلَا أَرْسَلْتَ  
إِلَيْنَا رَسُولًا فَنَتَّبِعَ

2656. The good things of this life may make a brave show, but they are as nothing compared with the good of the Hereafter. Both are provided by God. But the former are given to the just and the unjust as a test and trial, and in any case will pass away ; while the latter come specially from God for His devoted servants, and are incomparably of more value and will last through eternity.

2657. Sustenance, in the sense of the ordinary needs of life, the man of God does not worry about. That is provided by God for all, the just and the unjust. But the special provision, the real Sustenance, the spiritual fruit, is for a righteous life in the service of God.

2658. The question or plea of the Unbelievers is disingenuous. Many Signs have come with this Revelation. But the one that should have appealed to those who believed in former revelations and should have convinced them was what was in their own books.

2659. If the Sign mentioned in the last note did not convince them, it would mean that they were not true to their own faith. They were not straight with themselves. In justice they should have been punished for their falsehood. But they were given further respite. Or they would again have argued in a circle, and said : " If only God had sent us a living apostle we should have believed ! " The living apostle they flout because they want a Sign. The Sign they wish to ignore, because they want a living apostle !

Thy Signs before we were  
Humbled and put to shame".

135. Say : Each one (of us)  
Is waiting : wait ye, therefore,<sup>2660</sup>  
And soon shall ye know  
Who it is that is  
On the straight and even<sup>2661</sup>  
<sup>16</sup> Way, and who it is  
<sup>30</sup> That has received guidance."

إِيَّتِكَ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ تُذَلَّ وَتُخْزَى ۝

١٣٥- قُلْ كُلُّ مُتَرَبِّصٍ فَتَرٍ صُورًا

فَسَتَعْلَمُونَ مَنْ

أَصْحَبَ الصِّرَاطَ السَّوِيَّ

وَمَنْ اهْتَدَى ۝



2660. If people will not be true to their own lights, what further argument is left? The man of God can only say : " Let us wait the issue : my faith tells me that God's Truth must prevail." Cf. ix. 52.

2661. Cf. xix. 43. The straight and even Way must endure, and show that the man who follows it has received true guidance. All falsehood and crookedness must ultimately disappear.

INTRODUCTION TO SŪRA XXI (*Anbiyāa*).

The last Sūra dealt with the individual story (spiritual) of Moses and Aaron, and contrasted it with the growth of evil in individuals like Pharaoh and the Samiri, and ended with a warning against Evil, and an exhortation to the purification of the soul with prayer and praise. This Sūra begins with the external obstacles placed by Evil against such purification, and gives the assurance of God's power to defend men, illustrating this with reference to Abraham's fight against idolatry, Lot's fight against unnatural wickedness, Noah's against unbelief, that of David and Solomon against injustice and failure to proclaim God's glory by making full use of man's God-given faculties and power, that of Job against impatience and want of self-confidence, that of Ismā'il, Idris, and Ẓul-kifl against want of steady perseverance, that of Ẓun-nūn against hasty anger, that of Zakariya against spiritual isolation, and that of Mary against the lusts of this world. In each allusion there is a special point about the soul's purification. The common point is that the Prophets were not, as the vulgar suppose, just irresistible men. They had to win their ground inch by inch against all kinds of resistance from evil.

The chronology of this Sūra has no significance. It probably dates from the middle of the Meccan period of inspiration.

*Summary.*

Man treats, as he has always treated, the serious things of life with jest or contempt; but the Judgment must come, and Truth must triumph (xxi. 1-29, and C. 147).

Unity of Design, and certainty of God's Promise: God's protection and mercy, and His justice (xxi. 30-50, and C. 148).

How Abraham triumphed over idols, as did others among God's chosen ones over various forms of evil (xxi. 51-93, and C. 149).

Work righteousness while it is yet time, for the Judgment will come, and only the righteous will inherit (xxi. 94-112, and C. 150).

C. 147.—Men may lightly treat God's Signs  
(xxi. 1-29.) As jests, but the Judgment must come  
Inevitably. His Message is true,  
And delivered by God's Apostle, as from  
Man to men. Truth must triumph,  
And all false gods and false worship  
Must come to naught: for God is One,  
And His Truth has been one throughout the ages.

## Sura XXI.

*Anbiyaa, or The Prophets.**In the name of God, Most Gracious,  
Most Merciful.*

1. <sup>2662</sup> Loser and closer to mankind  
Comes their Reckoning: yet they  
Heed not and they turn away.
2. Never comes (aught) to them  
Of a renewed Message <sup>2663</sup>  
From their Lord, but they  
Listen to it as in jest,—
3. Their hearts toying as with  
Trifles. The wrong-doers  
conceal <sup>2664</sup>  
Their private counsels, (saying),  
"Is this (one) more than  
A man like yourselves?  
Will ye go to witchcraft  
With your eyes open?" <sup>2665</sup>
4. Say: <sup>2666</sup> "My Lord  
Knoweth (every) word (spoken)" <sup>2667</sup>  
In the heavens and on earth:  
He is the One that heareth  
And knoweth (all things)."



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

١- اقْتَرَبَ لِلنَّاسِ حِسَابُهُمْ وَهُمْ  
فِي غَفْلَةٍ مُّعْرِضُونَ ۝

٢- مَا يَأْتِيهِمْ مِنْ ذِكْرِ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ فَهُمْ يُعَذِّبُونَ  
إِلَّا اسْتَعْوَجُوهُهُمْ وَلَهُمْ يَلْعَبُونَ ۝

٣- لَاهِيَةً قَالُوا لَهُمْ وَأَسْرُوا النِّجْوَى  
الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا ۝

هَلْ هَذَا إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُكُمْ  
أَفَتَأْتُونَ السَّحَرَ وَأَنْتُمْ تَبْهَرُونَ ۝

٤- قُلْ مَنْ يَعْلَمُ الْقَوْلَ فِي السَّمَاءِ  
الْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ۝

2662. Every minute sees them nearer to their doom, and yet they are sadly heedless, and even actively turn away from the Message that would save them.

2663. In each age, when the Message of God is renewed, the very people who should have known better and welcomed the renewal and the sweeping away of human cobwebs, either receive it with amused self-superiority, which later turns to active hostility, or with careless indifference.

2664. God's Message is free and open, in the full light of day. His enemies plot against it in secrecy, lest their own false motives be exposed. Their jealousy prevents them from accepting a "man like themselves" as a teacher or warner or guide.

2665. Literally, "in a state in which you (actually) see (that it is witchcraft)". When God's Messenger is proved to be above them in moral worth, in true insight, in earnestness and power of eloquence, they accuse him of witchcraft, a word which may mean nothing, or perhaps some mysterious deceitful arts.

2666. Notice that in the usual Arabic texts printed in India the word *qala* is here and in xxi. 112 below, as well as in xxiii. 112, spelt differently from the usual spelling of the word in other places (e.g., in xx. 125-126). *Qul* is the reading of the Baḡra Qirāat, meaning, "Say thou" in the imperative. If we construe "he says", the pronoun refers to "this (one)" in the preceding verse, viz.: the Prophet. But more than one Commentator understands the meaning in the imperative, and I agree with them. The point is merely one of verbal construction. The meaning is the same in either case. See n. 2948 to xxiii. 112.

2667. Every word, whether whispered in secret (as in xxi. 3 above) or spoken openly, is known to God. Let not the wrong-doers imagine that their secret plots are secret to the Knower of all things.

5. "Nay," they say, "(these are)  
Medleys of dreams!—Nay,  
He forged it!—Nay,  
He is (but) a poet! <sup>2668</sup>  
Let him then bring us  
A Sign like the ones  
That were sent to  
(Prophets) of old!"

بَلْ قَالُوا أَضْغَاثُ أَحْلَامٍ  
بَلْ افْتَرَاهُ بَلْ هُوَ شَاعِرٌ  
فَلْيَأْتِنَا بآيَةٍ كَمَا  
أُرْسِلَ الْكَافِرُونَ ○

6. (As to those) before them,  
Not one of the populations  
Which We destroyed believed:  
Will these believe? <sup>2669</sup>

مِمَّا آمَنَتْ قَبْلَهُمْ مِنْ قَوْمِيهِ  
أَهْلَكْنَاهُمْ أَفَلَهُمْ يُؤْمِنُونَ ○

7. Before thee, also, the apostles  
We sent were but men,  
To whom We granted inspiration:  
If ye realise this not, ask  
Of those who possess the Message. <sup>2670</sup>

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا قَبْلَكَ إِلَّا رِجَالًا  
نُوحِي إِلَيْهِمْ فَسَلُّوا أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ إِنْ  
كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ○

8. Nor did We give them  
Bodies that ate no food,  
Nor were they exempt from death. <sup>2671</sup>

وَمَا جَعَلْنَاهُمْ جَسَدًا لَا يَأْكُلُونَ  
الطَّعَامَ وَمَا كَانُوا خَالِدِينَ ○

9. In the end We fulfilled  
To them Our promise,  
And We saved them  
And those whom We pleased,

ثُمَّ صَدَقْنَاهُمُ الْوَعْدَ فَأَنْجَيْنَاهُمْ وَمَنْ  
نَشَاءُ ○

2668. The charges against God's inspired Apostle are heaped up. "Magic!" says one: that means, "We don't understand it!" Says another, "Oh! but we know! he is a mere dreamer of confused dreams!" If the "dreams" fit in with real things and vital experiences, another will suggest, "Oh yes! why drag in supernatural agencies? he is clever enough to forge it himself!" Or another suggests, "He is a poet! Poets can invent things and say them in beautiful words!" Another interposes, "What we should like to see is miracles, like those we read of in stories of the Prophets of old!"

2669. 'If such miracles as you read of failed to convince Unbelievers of old, what chance is there that these Unbelievers will believe? Miracles may come, but they are no cures for Unbelief.

2670. See xvi. 43 and n. 2069. This answers the Unbelievers' taunt, "he is just a man like ourselves!" True, but all apostles sent by God were men, not angels or another kind of being, who could not understand men or whom men could not understand.

2671. As men they were subject to all the laws governing the physical bodies of men. They ate and drank, and their bodies perished in death.



But We destroyed those  
Who transgressed beyond  
bounds.<sup>2672</sup>

10. We have revealed for you  
(O men!) a book in which  
Is a Message for you :  
Will ye not then understand ?

#### SECTION 2.

11. ~~Is~~ Now many were the populations  
We utterly destroyed because  
Of their iniquities, setting up  
In their places other peoples ?

12. Yet, when they felt  
Our Punishment (coming),  
Behold, they (tried to) flee  
From it.<sup>2673</sup>

13. Flee not, but return to  
The good things of this life  
Which were given you,  
And to your homes,  
In order that ye may  
Be consulted (as to your fate)!<sup>2674</sup>

14. They said: "Ah! woe to us!  
We were indeed wrong-doers!"

15. And that cry of theirs  
Ceased not, till we made

وَأَهْلَكْنَا السُّرَرِينَ ○

١٠- لَقَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكُمْ كِتَابًا فِيهِ  
ذِكْرُكُمْ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ○

١١- وَكَمْ قَصَبْنَا مِنْ قَوْمٍ يَكُونُ لَكُمْ  
أَنْشَاءً بَعْدَهَا قَوْمًا آخَرِينَ ○

١٢- فَلَمَّا أَحْسَوْا بِأَسْنَاءِ  
إِذْ هُمْ مِنْهَا يَرْكُضُونَ ○

١٣- لَا تَرْكُضُوا وَارْجِعُوا إِلَى مَا  
أُتِرْتُمْ فِيهِ وَوَسَّيْكُمْ  
لَعَلَّكُمْ تَسْأَلُونَ ○

١٤- قَالُوا يَا وَيْلَنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا ظَالِمِينَ ○

١٥- قُلْ زَالَتْ أَسْوَاقُ الْغَايِبِينَ  
وَأَسْوَاقُ الْغَايِبِينَ ○

2672. But, however difficult (or impossible) their mission may have appeared to them, or to the world at first, they won through eventually, even those who *seemed* to have been defeated. Examples are given in the latter part of this Sūra, especially in xxi. 51-93. They were delivered from the Wrath which overtook the Unbelievers, as were those with them who accepted God's Message and placed themselves in conformity with His Will and Plan. That is the meaning of "whom We pleased".

2673. When they had every chance of repentance and reform, they rejected God's Message, and perhaps even put up an open defiance. When they actually began to feel the Wrath coming, they began to flee, but it was too late! Besides, where could they flee to from the Wrath of God? Hence the ironical appeal to them in the next verse: better go back to your luxuries and what you thought were your permanent homes! Cf. Christ's saying in the present Gospel of St. Matthew (iii. 7): "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the Wrath to come?"

2674. See last note. 'You thought your homes so comfortable: why don't you go back to them? Perhaps you will be consulted whether you should be punished or not? Perhaps there may be rewards to be given you, who knows?' This irony is itself the beginning of the Punishment. But the ungodly now see how wrong they had been. But their sighs and regrets now avail them nothing. It is too late. They are lost, and nothing can save them.

Them as a field  
That is mown, as ashes<sup>2675</sup>  
Silent and quenched.

16. Not for (idle) sport did We<sup>2676</sup>  
Create the heavens and the earth  
And all that is between!

17. If it had been Our wish  
To take (just) a pastime,  
We should surely have taken  
It from the things nearest  
To Us, if We would  
Do (such a thing)!<sup>2677</sup>

18. Nay, We hurl the Truth  
Against Falsehood, and it knocks  
Out its brain, and behold,  
Falsehood doth perish!  
Ah! woe be to you  
For the (false) things  
Ye ascribe (to Us).<sup>2678</sup>

19. To Him belong all (creatures)  
In the heavens and on earth:  
Even those who are in His  
(Very) Presence are not<sup>2679</sup>  
Too proud to serve Him,  
Nor are they (ever) weary  
(Of His service):

20. They celebrate His praises  
Night and day, nor do they  
Ever flag or intermit.

حُصَيْنًا خُودَيْنِ

۱۶- وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاءَ وَالْأَرْضَ

وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا لَعِبِينَ

۱۷- كَوَارِثُنَا أَنْ تَتَّخِذَ لَهُوًا  
لَا تَتَّخِذُ لَهُ مِنْ لَدُنَّا

إِنْ كُنَّا فَعَلِينَ

۱۸- بَلْ نَقْذِرُ بِالْحَقِّ عَلَى الْبَاطِلِ

فَيَذَرُ مَعَهُ فَإِذَا هُوَ رَاقٍ

وَلَكُمْ الْوَيْلُ بِمَا تَصِفُونَ

۱۹- وَلَهُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

وَمَنْ عِنْدَهُ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِهِ

وَلَا يَسْتَحْزِرُونَ

۲۰- يُسَبِّحُونَ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ

لَا يَفْتُرُونَ

2675. The two similes present two different aspects of the lamentation of the ungodly. When they really see the Wrath to come, there is a stampede, but where can they go to? Their lamentation is now the only mark of their life. But it dies away, as corn vanishes from a field that is being mown, or as a dying fire is slowly extinguished! They do not die. They wish they were dead! (xxviii: 40).

2676. The Hindu doctrine of *Lila*, that all things were created for sport, is here negated. But more: with God we must not associate any ideas but those of Truth, Righteousness, Mercy, Justice, and the other attributes implied in His Beautiful Names. He does not jest nor play with His creatures.

2677. If such an idea as that of play or pastime had been possible with regard to God, and if He had wished really to indulge in pastime, He would have done it with creatures of Light nearest to Him, not with the lowly material creation that we see around us.

2678. Such as that (1) God has partners (xxi. 22), or (2) that He has begotten a son (xxi. 26), or (3) has daughters (xvi. 57), or any other superstitious derogatory to the dignity and glory of God.

2679. The pure angelic hosts, whom we imagine to be glorious creatures of light, high in the spiritual world, near the Throne of God Himself, are yet His creatures, and serve Him without ceasing, and are proud to do so. Such is the majesty of God Most High!

21. **Or** have they taken  
(For worship) gods from the earth<sup>2680</sup>  
Who can raise (the dead)?<sup>2681</sup>

22. If there were, in the heavens  
And the earth, other gods<sup>2682</sup>  
Besides God, there would  
Have been confusion in both!  
But glory to God,  
The Lord of the Throne:  
(High is He) above  
What they attribute to Him!

23. He cannot be questioned  
For His acts, but they<sup>2683</sup>  
Will be questioned (for theirs).

24. **Or** have they taken  
For worship (other) gods<sup>2684</sup>  
Besides Him? Say, "Bring  
Your convincing proof: this  
Is the Message of those  
With me and the Message  
Of those before me."<sup>2685</sup>  
But most of them know not  
The Truth, and so turn away.

٢١- أَمْ اتَّخَذُوا إِلَهًا مِنَ الْأَرْضِ  
هُمْ يُشْرِكُونَ

٢٢- لَوْ كَانَ فِيهِمَا آلِهَةٌ إِلَّا اللَّهُ  
لَفَسَدَتَا  
سُبْحَنَ اللَّهُ رَبِّ الْعَرْشِ  
عَمَّا يُصِفُونَ

٢٣- لَا يُسْأَلُ عَمَّا يَفْعَلُ وَهُمْ  
يُسْأَلُونَ

٢٤- أَمْ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ  
قُلْ هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ  
هَذَا ذِكْرٌ مِنْ رَبِّي وَذِكْرٌ مَنْ قَبْلِي  
بَلْ أَكْذَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ  
الْحَقَّ فَمَنْ قَرِضُونِ

2680. The different kinds of false gods whom people raise from their imagination are now referred to. In verses 21-23, the reference is to the gods of the earth, whether idols or local godlings, or deified heroes, or animals or trees or forces of the nature around us, which men have from time to time worshipped. These, as deities, have no life except what their worshippers give to them.

2681. The answer of course is "no". No one but God can raise the dead to life. The miracle in the story of Jesus (iii. 49 and v. 113) was "by God's leave". It was a miracle of God, not one of Jesus by his own power or will.

2682. After the false gods of the earth (verse 21), are mentioned the false gods in the heavens and the earth, like those in the Greek Pantheon (verse 22), who quarrelled and fought and slandered each other and made their Olympus a perfect bear-garden!

2683. God is Self-Subsisting. All His creatures are responsible to Him and dependent on Him: there is no other being to whom He can be responsible or on whom He can be dependent.

2684. See above, n. 2682, where two kinds of false worship are noted. Now we are warned against a third danger, the worship of false gods of any sort. Pagan man is prolific of creating abstract images for worship, including Self or abstract Intelligence or Power. In verse 26 below is mentioned a fourth kind of false worship, which imagines that God begets sons or daughters.

2685. This verse should be read with the next. All reason revolts against the idea of conflicting gods, and points to Unity in Creation and Unity in Godhead. This is not only the Message of Islam ("those with me") but the message of all prophets who came before the holy Prophet Muhammad ("those before me"), and the line of prophets was closed with him. The Message given to every apostle in all ages was that of Unity as the fundamental basis of Order and Design in the world, material, moral, and spiritual.

25. Not an apostle did We  
Send before thee without  
This inspiration sent by Us  
To him: that there is  
No god but I; therefore  
Worship and serve Me.
26. And they say: " (God)  
Most Gracious has begotten<sup>2686</sup>  
Offspring." Glory to Him!  
They are (but) servants raised  
To honour.
27. They speak not before<sup>2687</sup>  
He speaks, and they act  
(In all things) by His command.
28. He knows what is before them,  
And what is behind them,  
And they offer no intercession  
Except for those who are  
Acceptable,<sup>2688</sup> and they<sup>2689</sup> stand  
In awe and reverence  
Of His (glory).
29. If any of them should say,  
"I am a god besides Him",  
Such a one We should  
Reward with Hell: thus  
Do We reward those  
Who do wrong.

٢٥- وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رَسُولٍ إِلَّا  
نُوحِي إِلَيْهِ  
أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدُونِ ○

٢٦- وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ الرَّحْمَنُ وَلَدًا سُبْحَانَهُ  
بَلْ عِبَادٌ مُكْتَرَمُونَ ○

٢٧- لَا يَسْأَلُونَكَ بِالْقَوْلِ  
وَهُمْ بِأَمْرِهِ يَعْمَلُونَ ○

٢٨- يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ  
وَلَا يَشْفَعُونَ إِلَّا لِمَنِ  
إِذْنُهُ ○ وَهُمْ مِنْ خَشْيَتِهِ مُشْفِقُونَ

٢٩- وَمَنْ يَقُلْ مِنْهُمْ إِنِّي إِلَهٌ مِنْ دُونِهِ  
فَذَلِكُمْ جَزَاءُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا  
فَتَجْزِي الظَّالِمِينَ ○

2686. This refers both to the Trinitarian superstition that God has begotten a son, and to the Arab superstition that the angels were daughters of God. All such superstitions are derogatory to the glory of God. The prophets and the angels are no more than servants of God: they are raised high in honour, and therefore they deserve our highest respect, but not our worship.

2687. They never say anything before they receive God's command to say it, and their acts are similarly conditioned. This is also the teaching of Jesus as reported in the Gospel of St. John (xii. 49-50): "For I have not spoken of myself: but the Father which sent me, He gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that His commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak." If rightly understood, "Father" has the same meaning as our "Rabb", Sustainer and Cherisher, not Begetter or Progenitor.

2688. Cf. xx. 109. "Acceptable" means that they have conformed to the Will of God and obeyed His Law, thus winning the stamp of His approval.

2689. They: the usual interpretation refers the pronoun to the servants of God who intercede: it may also refer to those on whose behalf intercession is made: they do not take it as a matter of course, but stand in due awe and reverence of God's great glory and mercy.

## C. 148.—Look at God's Creation : contemplate

(xxi. 30-50.) Its unity of Design and benevolence  
 Of Purpose. Death must come to all,  
 But life and faith are not objects of ridicule.  
 Truth will outlast all mockery : 'tis God  
 Who calls, because He cares for you,  
 And on His Judgment Seat will weigh  
 Each act, each thought, each motive, great  
 Or small, with perfect justice. Come,  
 Ye all, reject not His blessed Message.

## SECTION 3.

30. Do not the Unbelievers see  
 That the heavens and the earth  
 Were joined together (as one <sup>2690</sup>  
 Unit of Creation), before  
 We clove them asunder?  
 We made from water <sup>2691</sup>  
 Every living thing. Will they  
 Not then believe?

31. And We have set on the earth  
 Mountains standing firm, <sup>2692</sup>

٣٠- أَوَلَمْ يَرِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّ السَّمٰوٰتِ  
 وَالْاَرْضَ كَانَتَا رَتْقًا فَفَتَقْنَاهُمَا  
 وَجَعَلْنَا مِنَ الْمَآءِ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ حَيٍّ  
 اَفَلَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ

٣١- وَجَعَلْنَا فِي الْاَرْضِ رَوَاسِي

2690. The evolution of the ordered worlds as we see them is hinted at. As man's intellectual gaze over the physical world expands, he sees more and more how Unity is the dominating note in God's wonderful Universe. Taking the solar system alone, we know that the maximum intensity of sun-spots corresponds with the maximum intensity of magnetic storms on this earth. The universal law of gravitation seems to bind all mass together. Physical facts point to the throwing off of planets from vast quantities of diffused nebular matter, of which the central condensed core is the sun.

2691. About 72 per cent. of the surface of our Globe is still covered with water, and it has been estimated that if the inequalities on the surface were all levelled, the whole surface would be under water, as the mean elevation of land sphere-level would be 7,000—10,000 feet below the surface of the ocean. This shows the predominance of water on our Globe. That all life began in the water is also a conclusion to which our latest knowledge in biological science points. Apart from the fact that protoplasm, the original basis of living matter, is liquid or semi-liquid and in a state of constant flux and instability, there is the fact that land animals, like the higher vertebrates, including man, show, in their embryological history, organs like those of fishes, indicating the watery origin of their original habitat. The constitution of protoplasm is about 80 to 85 per cent. of water.

2692. Cf. xvi. 15 and n. 2038. *Lest it should shake with them*: here "them" refers back to "they" at the end of the preceding verse, meaning "Unbelievers". It might be mankind in general, but the pointed address to those who do not realise and understand God's mercies is appropriate, to drive home to them the fact that it is God's well-ordered providence that protects them normally from cataclysms like earthquakes, but that they could for their iniquities be destroyed in an instant, as the 'Ad and the Thamûd were destroyed before them. As pointed out in n. 2691 above, if the surface of the earth were levelled up, it would all be under water, and therefore the firm mountains are a further source of security to life which has evolved in terrestrial forms. Though the mountains may seem impassable barriers, yet God's providence has provided broad passes between them to afford highways for human communications.

Let it should shake with them,  
And We have made therein  
Broad highways  
(between mountains)  
For them to pass through:  
That they may receive guidance.<sup>2693</sup>

أَنْ تَسِيلَ فِيهِمْ  
وَجَعَلْنَا فِيهَا فِجَاجًا سُبُلًا  
لِّمَنْ لَّدُنَّا أَزْوَاجٌ ۝

32. And We have made  
The heavens as a canopy  
Well guarded:<sup>2694</sup> yet do they  
Turn away from the Signs  
Which these things (point to)!

وَجَعَلْنَا السَّمَاءَ سَقْفًا مَّحْفُوظًا ۝  
وَهُمْ عَنْ آيَاتِهَا مُعْرِضُونَ ۝

33. It is He Who created  
The Night and the Day,  
And the sun and the moon:  
All (the celestial bodies) †  
Swim along, each in its<sup>2695</sup>  
Rounded course.

۝ وَهُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ  
وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ ۝  
كُلٌّ فِي فَلَكٍ يَسْبَحُونَ ۝

34. We granted not to any man  
Before three permanent life<sup>2696</sup>  
(Here): if then thou shouldst die,  
Would they live permanently?

۝ وَمَا جَعَلْنَا لِلْبَشَرِ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ الْخَلْدَ  
أَبَدًا ۝ فَبِمَا نَسْخُلُهُمُ الْخَلْدَ ۝

35. Every soul shall have  
A taste of death:<sup>2697</sup>  
And We test you  
By evil and by good

۝ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَاقَةُ الْمَوْتِ ۝  
وَنَبْلُوكُمْ بِالشَّرِّ وَالْخَيْرِ

2693. In both the literal and the figurative sense. Literally these natural mountain highways direct men in the way they should go. Figuratively, these wonderful instances of God's providence should turn men's thoughts to the true guidance of God in life and spiritual progress.

2694. *Canopy well guarded*: the heavens form a canopy that is secure from falling down; they also form a sublime spectacle and a Mystery that man can only faintly reach. Perhaps also the mystery of spiritual life is metaphorically hinted at. Cf. also xv. 17.

2695. I have indicated, unlike most translators, the metaphor of swimming implied in the original words: how beautiful it is to contemplate the heavenly bodies swimming through space (or ether) in their rounded courses before our gaze!

2696. Life on this planet without death has not been granted to any man. The *Khidhr* legends are popular tales. His life without death on this earth is nowhere mentioned in the Qur'an. The taunt of the Unbelievers at the holy Prophet was therefore futile. Could any of them live without death at some time or other? Could they name any one who did?

2697. Cf. iii. 185, and n. 491. The soul does not die, but when it separates from the body at the death of the body, the soul gets a taste of death. In our life of probation on this earth, our virtue and faith are tested by many things: some are tested by calamities, and some by the good things of this life. If we prove our true mettle, we pass our probation with success. In any case all must return to God, and then will our life be appraised at its true value.

By way of trial.  
To Us must ye return.

36. When the Unbelievers see thee,  
They treat thee not except  
With ridicule. "Is this,"  
(They say), "the one who talks<sup>2698</sup>  
Of your gods?" And they  
Blasphe me at the mention  
Of (God) Most Gracious!
37. Man is a creature of haste:<sup>2699</sup>  
Soon (enough) will I show  
You My Signs; then  
Ye will not ask Me  
To hasten them!
38. They say: "When will this  
Promise come to pass,  
If what ye say is true?"
39. If only the Unbelievers<sup>2700</sup>  
Knew (the time) when they  
Will not be able  
To ward off the Fire  
From their faces, nor yet  
From their backs, and (when)  
No help can reach them!
40. Nay, it may come to them  
All of a sudden and confound  
Them: no power will they  
Have then to avert it,  
Nor will they (then)  
Get respite.

فَشَنَاءُ ۖ وَإِنَّا لَنَرْجِعُونَهُ

٣٦- وَإِذَا رَأَوْاكَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنْ يَخُذُّوكَ  
إِلَّا هُزُوعًا  
أَهَذَا الَّذِي يَدَّعَىٰ إِلَهُتَكُمْ  
وَهُمْ بِذِكْرِ الرَّحْمَنِ هُمْ كَافِرُونَ  
٣٧- خُلِقَ الْإِنْسَانُ مِنْ عَجَلٍ  
سَآوِرِكُمْ أَيَّتَنِي فَلَا تَسْتَعْجِلُونِ

٣٨- وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَىٰ هَذَا الْوَعْدُ  
إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

٣٩- لَوْ يَعْلَمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا حِينَ  
لَا يَكْفُرُونَ عَنْ وُجُوهِهِمُ النَّارُ  
وَلَا عَنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ

٤٠- بَلْ تَأْتِيهِمْ بَغْتَةً فَتَبْهَتُهُمْ  
فَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ رَدَّهَا  
وَلَا هُمْ يُنظَرُونَ

2698. To the godly man the issue between false worship and true worship is a very serious matter. To the sceptics and unbelievers it is only a joke. They take it lightly, and laugh at the godly man. They not only laugh at him, but they blaspheme when the name of the One True God is mentioned. The reply to this is in the next verse.

2699. Haste is in the very bone and marrow of man. If he is granted respite for his own sake, in order that he may have a further chance of repentance and coming back to God, he says impatiently and incredulously: "Bring on the Punishment quickly, that I may see if what you say is true!" Alas, it is too true! When the Punishment actually comes near and he sees it, he will not want it hastened. He will want more time and further delay! Poor creature of haste!

2700. They would not be so unreasonable if they only realised the terrible future for them! The Fire will envelop them on all sides, and no help will then be possible. Is it not best for them now to turn and repent? The Punishment may come too suddenly, as is said in the next verse.

41. Mocked were (many)  
Apostles before thee;  
But the scoffers  
Were hemmed in  
By the thing that they mocked.<sup>2701</sup>

## SECTION 4.

42. Say, "Who can keep  
You safe by night and by day  
From (the Wrath of) (God)  
Most Gracious?"<sup>2702</sup> Yet they  
Turn away from the mention  
Of their Lord.
43. Or have they gods that  
Can guard them from Us?  
They have no power to aid  
Themselves, nor can they  
Be defended from Us.<sup>2703</sup>
44. Nay, We gave the good things  
Of this life to these men  
And their fathers until  
The period<sup>2704</sup> grew long for them;  
See they not that We<sup>2705</sup>  
Gradually reduce the land  
(In their control) from  
Its outlying borders? Is it  
Then they who will win?

۴۱- وَلَقَدْ اسْتَهْزَؤْا بِرُسُلِ مِّن قَبْلِكَ  
فَخَاقَ بِالَّذِينَ سَخِرُوا مِنْهُمْ  
مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِءُونَ ۝

۴۲- قُلْ مَن يَكْلُؤُكُمْ بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ  
مِنَ الرَّحْمَنِ  
بَلْ هُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ رَبِّهِمْ مُّعْرِضُونَ ۝

۴۳- أَمْ لَهُمْ آلِهَةٌ تَمْنَعُهُمْ مِّن دُونِنَا  
لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ نَصْرَ أَنفُسِهِمْ  
وَلَا هُمْ قِيَّاتُ يُنصَرُونَ ۝

۴۴- بَلْ مَتَّعْنَا هَؤُلَاءِ وَآبَاءَهُمْ  
حَتَّى طَالَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْعُمُرُ  
أَفَلَا يَرَوْنَ أَنَّا نَأْتِي الْأَرْضَ  
نَنقُصُهَا مِنْ أَطْرَافِهَا  
أَفَلَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ الْغَيْبُونَ ۝

2701. The same verse occurs at vi. 10, where see n. 843. 'What they are mocking at now will be in a position to mock them in due time.'

2702. 'God is most Gracious: if, in spite of His great mercy, you are so rebellious and depraved as to incur His Wrath, who is there who can save you? His Wrath can descend on you at any time, by night or by day.'

2703. *Aṣḥaba*: to join as companion; with 'an or min it has also the meaning of to defend or remove from some one. The full signification can only be got by a long paraphrase: 'they are not fit to be mentioned in the same breath with Us, nor can they be defended from Us.'

2704. 'Umr: age, generation, period, time, life. Here "period" is most appropriate, as it covers many generations, "these men and their fathers".

2705. Cf. xiii. 41 and n. 1865. The particular signification is that Islam spread from the outer borders, social and geographical, gradually inwards. The social fringe was the humbler people, such as slaves and poor men. The geographical reference is to Medina and tribes away from the Mecca centre. The proud and unbelieving Quraish were the last to come in when the circle was gradually drawn tighter and tighter around them. The general signification applies to all times. God's Truth makes its way first among the poor and the lowly, those whose minds are unsoiled by prejudices of false pride or false knowledge, but it gradually hems in the obstinate, until it prevails in the end.



45. Say, "I do but warn you  
According to revelation":  
But the deaf will not hear  
The call, (even) when  
They are warned!<sup>2706</sup>
46. If but a breath of the Wrath  
Of thy Lord do touch them,  
They will then say, "Woe  
To us! we did wrong indeed!"
47. We shall set up scales  
Of justice for the Day  
Of judgment, so that  
Not a soul will be dealt with  
Unjustly in the least.  
And if there be  
(No more than) the weight  
Of a mustard seed,<sup>2707</sup>  
We will bring it (to account):  
And enough are We  
To take account.<sup>2708</sup>
48. In the past We granted  
To Moses and Aaron

٤٥- قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنذَرْتُكُمْ بِالْوَحْيِ  
وَلَا يَسْمَعُ الصُّمُّ الدُّعَاءَ  
إِذَا مَا يُنذَرُونَ ○

٤٦- وَلَئِنْ مَسَّتْهُمُ نَفْحَةٌ مِنْ عَذَابِ  
رَبِّكَ لَيَقُولُنَّ يُوَيْلَنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا ظَالِمِينَ ○

٤٧- وَنَضَعُ الْمَوَازِينَ الْقِسْطَ لِيَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ  
فَلَا تَظْلِمُ نَفْسٌ شَيْئًا  
وَلَنْ كَانَ مِثْقَالُ حَبَّةٍ  
مِنْ خَرْدَلٍ أَتَيْنَا بِهَا  
وَكُفَى بِنَا حَاسِبِينَ ○

٤٨- وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى وَهَارُونَ

2706. According to the English saying, "none is so deaf as those who will not hear". When they deliberately shut their ears to warnings from the Merciful God, meant for their own good, the responsibility is their own. But their cowardice is shown in the next verse by their behaviour when the first breath of the Wrath reaches them.

50.

2707. Not the smallest action, word, thought, motive, or predilection but must come into the account of God. Cf. Browning (in *Rabbi Ben Ezra*): "But all, the world's coarse thumb And finger failed to plumb. So passed in making up the main account; All instincts immature, All purposes unsure, That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's account. Thoughts hardly to be packed into a narrow act, Fancies that broke through language and escaped; All I could never be, All, men ignored in me, This, I was worth to God, Whose wheel the pitcher shaped."

2708. The literalism of Sale has here excelled itself: he translates, "and there will be sufficient accountants with us"! What is meant is that when God takes account, His accounting will be perfect: there will be no flaw in it, as there may be in earthly accountants, who require other people's help in some matters of account which they do not understand for want of knowledge of that particular department they are dealing with. God's knowledge is perfect, and therefore His justice will be perfect also; for He will not fail to take into account all the most intangible things that determine conduct and character. See last note. There is no contradiction between this and xviii. 104-105, where it is said that men of vain works, i.e., shallow hypocritical deeds, will have no weight attached to their deeds. In fact the two correspond.

The Criterion (for judgment),<sup>2709</sup>  
And a Light and a Message  
For those who would do right,—

49. Those who fear their Lord  
In their most secret thoughts,  
And who hold the Hour  
(Of Judgment) in awe.<sup>2710</sup>

50. And this is a blessed  
Message which We have  
Sent down: will ye then  
Reject it?<sup>2711</sup>

الْفُرْقَانِ وَضِيَاءٌ وَذِكْرٌ  
لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ ۝

۴۹- الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُم بِالْغَيْبِ  
وَهُمْ قَرْنَ السَّاعَةِ مُشْفِقُونَ ۝

۵۰- وَهَذَا ذِكْرٌ مُّبَارَكٌ أَنزَلْنَاهُ  
أَأَنْتُمْ لَهُ مُنْكَرُونَ ۝

C. 149.—The great exemplars of virtue conquered  
(xxi. 51-93.) Evil, each according to his circumstances:

Abraham stood staunch in the fire  
Of persecution, unhurt; Lūṭ was bold  
In reproving abominations; Noah survived  
The Flood by his faith, in a world of Unbelief;  
David sought justice, and sang God's praises;  
Solomon by wisdom subdued the refractory;  
Job was patient in suffering; Ismā'il,  
Idris, and Zūl-kifl were true in constancy  
Amid temptation; Jonah turned to God  
After a short misunderstanding; Zakariyā  
And his family were exemplars of devoutness;  
And Mary of chastity. All men and women  
Of God form one united Brotherhood.

2709. Cf. ii. 53 and n. 69, where the meaning of *Furqān* is discussed. Here three things are mentioned as given to Moses and Aaron: (1) The Criterion for judgment; this might well be the wonderful Proofs they saw of God's goodness and glory, from which they could have no doubt as to God's will and command; (2) the Light; this was the inner enlightenment of their soul, such as comes from inspiration: and (3) the Message, the Book, the original Book of Moses, which Aaron as his lieutenant would also use as a guide for his people.

2710. Note the three kinds of fear mentioned in xxi. 48-49. *Taqwā* is the fear of running counter to the will of God; it is akin to the love of Him; for we fear to offend those we love: it results in right conduct, and those who entertain it are "those who would do right". Then there is *Khashyat*, the fear of God, lest the person who entertains it may be found, in his inmost thoughts, to be short of the standard which God wishes for him; this is also righteousness but in a less high degree than *Taqwā* which is akin to love. And thirdly, there is the fear of consequences on the Day of Judgment (*ishfaq*); this also may lead to righteousness, but is on a still lower plane. Perhaps the three correspond to the Criterion, the Light, and the Message (or Warning) of the last verse.

2711. Here is a man and a Book, greater than Moses and his Book. Are you going to reject him and it?

## SECTION 5.

51. We bestowed aforetime  
On Abraham his rectitude<sup>2712</sup>  
Of conduct, and well were We  
Acquainted with him.<sup>2713</sup>

اِهـ وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا اِبْرٰهِيْمَ رُشْدًا مِّن قَبْلِ  
وَكُنَّا بِهٖ عَلِيْمِيْنَ ۝

52. Behold! he said  
To his father and his people,<sup>2714</sup>  
"What are these images,  
To which ye are  
(So assiduously) devoted?"

هـ اِذْ قَالَ لِاٰتِيْنِهٖ وَقَوْمِهٖ  
مَا هٰذِهٖ اَلْعَبَاثِيْلُ الَّتِي  
اَنْتُمْ لَهَا عٰكِفُوْنَ ۝

53. They said, "We found  
Our fathers worshipping them."

هـ قَالُوْا وَجَدْنَا اٰبَاؤَنَا لَهَا لٰعِبِدِيْنَ ۝

54. He said, "Indeed ye  
Have been in manifest  
Error—ye and your fathers."

هـ قَالَ لَقَدْ كُنْتُمْ  
اَنْتُمْ وَاٰبَاؤُكُمْ فِي ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ۝

55. They said, "Have you  
Brought us the Truth,  
Or are you one  
Of those who jest?"<sup>2715</sup>

هـ قَالُوْا اَجْمَعْتُمْ عَلٰى الْحَقِّ  
اَمْ اَنْتُمْ مِنَ الْمُجْتَبِيْنَ ۝

56. He said, "Nay, your Lord  
Is the Lord of the heavens  
And the earth, He Who  
Created them (from nothing):<sup>2716</sup>  
And I am a witness  
To this (truth).

هـ قَالَ كَلَّيْكُمْ رَبَّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ  
الَّذِيْ فَطَرَهُنَّ ۝  
وَاَنَا عَلٰى ذٰلِكُمْ مِنَ الشّٰهِيْدِيْنَ ۝

2712. *Rushd*: right conduct, corresponding in action to the quality expressed in the epithet *Hanif* (sound or true in Faith) applied to Abraham in ii. 135 and elsewhere.

2713. Hence Abraham's title "Friend of God" (*Khalil-ullah*): iv. 125.

2714. Reference is made to Abraham in many places. In xix. 42-49 it was with reference to his relations to his father: the problem was how a righteous man should deal with his father, when his duty to his father conflicts with his duty to God. Here the problem is: how a righteous man should deal with evil and overcome it; how he should fight against evil, and if he is subjected to the fire of persecution, how his firmness draws God's Mercy, and the very troubles he is placed in become his comfort and joy.

2715. Abraham looked at life with a serious eye, and his people took it light-heartedly. He was devoted to Truth, and they cared more for ancestral custom. In the conflict he seemed to be in their power. But he was fearless, and he triumphed by God's Grace.

2716. For the various words for "creation" see n. 120 to ii. 117, where *faṣara* is explained and differentiated from other words of similar meaning.

57. "And by God, I have  
A plan for your idols—  
After ye go away  
And turn your backs"...<sup>2717</sup>

8. So he broke them to pieces,  
(All) but the biggest of them,  
That they might turn  
(And address themselves) to it.<sup>2718</sup>

59. They said, "Who has  
Done this to our gods:  
He must indeed be  
Some man of impiety!"

60. They said, "We heard  
A youth talk of them:<sup>2719</sup>  
He is called Abraham."

61. They said, "Then bring him  
Before the eyes of the people,  
That they may bear witness."

62. They said, "Art thou  
The one that did this  
With our gods, O Abraham?"<sup>2720</sup>

٥٧- وَتَأْمُرُوهُمُ أَنْ يُدْبِرُوا  
أَسْفَافَهُمْ  
○ بَعْدَ أَنْ تُوَلُّوا مُدْبِرِينَ

٥٨- فَجَعَلَهُمْ جُذًا إِلَّا كَبِيرَهُمْ  
○ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ

٥٩- قَالُوا مَنْ فَعَلَ هَذَا بِآلِهَتِنَا  
إِنَّهُ لَكِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ○

٦٠- قَالُوا سَمِعْنَا فَتًى يَذْكُرُهُمْ  
○ يُقَالُ لَهُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ

٦١- قَالُوا فَاتُوا بِهِ عَلَى أَغْيُنِ النَّاسِ  
○ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَشْهَدُونَ

٦٢- قَالُوا أَأَنْتَ فَعَلْتَ هَذَا  
بِآلِهَتِنَا يَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ ○

2717. He wants to convince them of the powerlessness of their idols. But he does not do it underhand. He tells them that he is going to do something when once they are gone and their backs are turned to the idols,—as much as to say that the idols are dependent on their care and attention. Apparently the people are amused and want to see what he does. So they leave him to his own devices.

2718. He was enacting a scene, to make the people ashamed of worshipping senseless stocks and stones. He left the biggest idol untouched and broke the others to pieces, as if a fight had taken place between the idols, and the biggest had smashed the others. Would they turn to the surviving idol and ask him how it all happened?

2719. Different groups of people are speaking. Those who were not present at Abraham's speech in verse 57 ask, "who has done this?" Those who were, at once name him, whereupon a formal council of the people was held, and Abraham was arraigned.

2720. They asked him the formal question. There was no mystery about it. He had already openly threatened to do something to the idols, and people who had heard his threats were there. He now continues his ironic taunt to the idol-worshippers. 'You ask me! Why don't you ask the idols? Doesn't it look as if this big fellow has smashed the smaller ones in a quarrel?' If they do not ask the idols, they confess that the idols have not intelligence enough to answer! This argument is developed in verses 64-67. Note that while the false worshippers laughed at his earnestness, he pays them out by a grim practical joke, which at the same time advances the cause of Truth.

63. He said: "Nay, this  
Was done by—  
This is their biggest one!  
Ask them, if they  
Can speak intelligently!"
64. So they turned to themselves  
And said, "Surely ye  
Are the ones in the wrong!" <sup>2721</sup>
65. Then were they confounded <sup>2722</sup>  
With shame: (they said),  
"Thou knowest full well that  
These (idols) do not speak!"
66. (Abraham) said, "Do ye then  
Worship, besides God,  
Things that can neither  
Be of any good to you  
Nor do you harm?"
67. "Fie upon you, and upon <sup>2723</sup>  
The things that ye worship  
Besides God! Have ye  
No sense?"...
68. They said, "Burn him  
And protect your gods,  
If ye do (anything at all)!"

٦٣- قَالَ بَلْ فَعَلَهُ كَبِيرُهُمْ هَذَا فَاسْأَلُوهُمْ إِنْ كَانُوا يَنْطِقُونَ

٦٤- فَرَجَعُوا إِلَى أَنْفُسِهِمْ فَقَالُوا إِنَّكُمْ أَنْتُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ

٦٥- ثُمَّ نَكَّسُوا عَلَى رُءُوسِهِمْ لَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمْ مَا هَؤُلَاءِ يَنْطِقُونَ

٦٦- قَالَ أَفَتَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُكُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَضُرُّكُمْ

٦٧- أَفَ تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ

٦٨- قَالُوا حَرِّقُوهُ وَانصُرُوا آلِهَتَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ فاعِلِينَ

2721. Abraham's biting irony cut them to the quick. What could they say? They turned to each other. Some among them thought he had the best of the argument. They were not keen on idolatry, and they told their fellows that it was useless arguing with Abraham. They all hung their heads in shame. But presently they thought they would face out Abraham, and take his words literally. They said, "You know quite well that idols do not speak!" This was precisely what Abraham wanted them to say, and he delivered his final blow! See n. 2723 below.

2722 Literally, "they were turned down on their heads" which may suggest a metaphorical somersault, i.e., that they recovered from their dawning shame of idolatry and were prepared to argue it out with the youth Abraham. But I think there is better authority for the interpretation I have adopted.

2723. As soon as they admitted in so many words that the idols could not speak, Abraham delivered his final attack: 'Then why do you worship such useless impotent creatures?' After that, there remains nothing but the argument of violence, which they proceed to exercise, being the party in power. 'Burn him at the stake' is an easy cry! But it was not Abraham that suffered: it was his persecutors (xxi. 70).

69. We said, "O Fire!<sup>2724</sup>  
Be thou cool,  
And (a means of) safety  
For Abraham!"<sup>2725</sup>

٦٩- قُلْنَا لَيْنَا اَوْ كُنُوْا بِرُءُوْا  
وَسَلَامًا عَلٰٓى اِبْرٰهِيْمَ ۝

70. Then they sought a stratagem  
Against him: but We  
Made them the ones  
That lost most!<sup>2726</sup>

٧٠- وَاَرَادُوْا رِيْثًا  
فَجَعَلْنٰهُمْ الْاٰخِرِيْنَ ۝

71. But We delivered him  
And (his nephew) Lūṭ  
(And directed them) to the land<sup>2727</sup>  
Which We have blessed  
For the nations.

٧١- وَنَجَّيْنٰهُ وَاٰوٰىاِلَی الْاَرْضِ  
الَّتِیْ بَرَكْنَا فِیْهَا لِلْعٰلَمِیْنَ ۝

72. And We bestowed on him  
Isaac

٧٢- وَوَهَبْنَا اِلَیْهِ اِسْحٰقَ ۝

2724. The nature of fire, by all the physical laws of matter, is to be hot. The supremacy of mind over matter is a phrase much used, but the supremacy of the spiritual over the material is not so commonly understood. And yet it is the greatest factor in the estimate of Reality. The material is ephemeral and relative. The spiritual is eternal and absolute. Through all the fire of persecution and hatred Abraham remained unhurt. The fire became cool, and a means of safety for Abraham.

2725. Can we form any idea of the place where he passed through the furnace, and the stage in his career at which this happened? He was born in Ur of the Chaldees, a place on the lower reaches of the Euphrates, not a hundred miles from the Persian Gulf. This was the cradle, or one of the cradles, of human civilisation. Astronomy was studied here in very ancient times, and the worship of the sun, moon, and stars was the prevailing form of religion. Abraham revolted against this quite early in life, and his argument is referred to in vi. 74-82. They also had idols in their temples, probably idols representing heavenly bodies and celestial winged creatures. He was still a youth (xxi. 60) when he broke the idols. This was stage No. 2. After this he was marked down as a rebel and persecuted. Perhaps some years passed before the incident of his being thrown into the Fire (xxi. 68-69) took place, or the incident may be only allegorical. Traditionally the Fire incident is referred to a king called Nimrūd, about whom see n. 1565 to xi. 69. If Nimrūd's capital was in Assyria, near Nineveh (site near modern Mosul), we may suppose either that the king's rule extended over the whole of Mesopotamia, or that Abraham wandered north through Babylonia to Assyria. Various stratagems were devised to get rid of him (xxi. 70), but he was saved by the mercy of God. The final break came when he was probably a man of mature age and could speak to his father with some authority. This incident is referred to in xix. 41-48. He now left his ancestral lands, and avoiding the Syrian desert, came to the fertile lands of Aram or Syria, and so south to Canaan, when the incident of xi. 69-76 and the adventure of his nephew Lūṭ took place. It is some years after this that we may suppose he built the Ka'ba with Isma'īl (ii. 124-129), and his prayer in xiv. 35-41 may be referred to the same time. His visit to Egypt (Gen. xii. 10) is not referred to in the Qur-ān.

2726. As they could not get rid of him by open punishment, they tried secret plans, but were foiled throughout. It was not he that lost, but they. On the contrary he left them and prospered and became the progenitor of great peoples.

2727. The land of Aram or Syria, which in its widest connotation includes Canaan or Palestine. Syria is a well-watered fertile land, with a Mediterranean sea-coast, on which the famous commercial cities of Tyre and Sidon were situated. Its population is very mixed, as it has been a bone of contention between all the great kingdoms and empires of Western Asia and Egypt, and European interest in it dates from the most ancient times and continues under the French Mandate to the present day.

And, as an additional gift,<sup>2728</sup>  
(A grandson), Jacob, and We  
Made righteous men of every one  
(Of them).

73. And We made them  
Leaders, guiding (men) by  
Our Command, and We  
Sent them inspiration  
To do good deeds,  
To establish regular prayers,  
And to practise regular charity;  
And they constantly served  
Us (and Us only).<sup>2729</sup>

74. And to Lût, too,  
We gave Judgment and Knowledge,  
And We saved him  
From the town which practised  
Abominations: truly they were  
A people given to Evil,  
A rebellious people.<sup>2730</sup>

75. And We admitted him  
To Our Mercy: for he  
Was one of the Righteous.

#### SECTION 6.

76. (Remember) Noah, when  
He cried (to Us) aforetime:  
We listened to his (prayer)  
And delivered him and his  
Family from great distress.<sup>2731</sup>

وَيَعْقُوبَ نَافِلَةً  
وَكُلًّا جَعَلْنَا صَالِحِينَ ○

٢٣- وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَئِمَّةً يَهْدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا  
وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ فِعْلَ الْخَيْرَاتِ  
وَإِقَامَ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءَ الزَّكَاةِ  
وَكَانُوا لَنَا عِبَادِينَ ۝

٢٤- وَلُوطًا آتَيْنَاهُ حُكْمًا وَعِلْمًا  
وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْقَرْيَةِ الَّتِي  
كَانَتْ تَعْمَلُ الْخَبَائِثَ  
إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمًا فَاسِقِينَ ○

٢٥- وَأَدْخَلْنَاهُ فِي رَحْمَتِنَا  
إِنَّهُ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ۝

٢٦- وَنُوحًا إِذْ نَادَى مِنْ قَبْلُ  
كَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ فَنَجَّيْنَاهُ وَأَهْلَهُ  
مِنَ الْكَرْبِ الْعَظِيمِ ○

2728. *Nāfilat* has many meanings: (1) booty; (2) extra work or prayer; (3) extra or additional gift; (4) grandson. The two last significations are implied here. Not only was Abraham given a son in his old age; he was given not only Isaac, but several sons, the chief being *Ismā'il* and Isaac, who both joined in burying him (Gen. xxv. 9); and he also saw grandsons. *Ismā'il* is specially mentioned later (xxi. 85) apart from Isaac's line, on account of his special importance for Islam.

2729. The spiritual lesson from this passage may be recapitulated. The righteous man makes no compromise with evil. If the votaries of evil laugh at him he pays them in their own coin, but he stands firmly by his principles. His firmness causes some confusion among the followers of evil, and he openly declares the faith that is in him. They try, openly and secretly, to injure or kill him, but God protects him, while evil perishes from its own excesses.

2730. Lot's people were given to unspeakable abominations. His mission was to preach to them. He withstood Evil, but they rejected him. They were punished, but he and his followers were saved. See xv. 61-74; xi. 77-82; and vii. 80-84.

2731. The contemporaries of Noah were given to Unbelief, oppression of the poor, and vain disputations. He carried God's Message to them, and standing fast in faith, built the Ark, in which he was saved with his followers from the Flood, while the wicked were drowned. See. xi. 25-48.

77. We helped him against  
People who rejected Our Signs :  
Truly they were a people  
Given to Evil : so We  
Drowned them (in the Flood)  
All together.

وَنَصَرْنَاهُ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا  
إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمًا سَوِيًّا  
فَاغْرَقْنَاهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ○

78. And remember David  
And Solomon, when they  
Gave judgment in the matter  
Of the field into which  
The sheep of certain people  
Had strayed by night :  
We did witness their judgment.

وَدَاوُدَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ إِذْ  
يَحْكُمَانِ فِي الْحَرْثِ إِذْ نَفِثَتْ فِيهِمُ  
الْقَوْمُ  
وَكُنَّا بِالْحُكْمِ لَهُمْ شَاهِدِينَ ○

79. To Solomon We inspired<sup>2732</sup>  
The right understanding  
Of the matter : to each  
(Of them) We gave Judgment  
And Knowledge ; it was  
Our power that made  
The hills and the birds  
Celebrate Our praises,<sup>2733</sup>  
With David : it was We  
Who did (all these things).

وَفَقَّهْنَاهَا سُلَيْمَانَ  
وَكَوْنًا إِنَّا حَكَمَاءُ وَعِلْمًا  
وَسَقَرْنَا مَعَ دَاوُدَ الْجَبَّالِ  
يُسَبِّحُنَ وَالْعَلِيِّ  
وَكُنَّا فاعِلِينَ ○

80. It was We Who taught him<sup>2734</sup>  
The making of coats of mail

وَعَلَّمْنَاهُ صَنْعَةَ لَبُؤٍ

2732. The sheep, on account of the negligence of the shepherd, got into a cultivated field (or vineyard) by night and ate up the young plants or their tender shoots, causing damage, to the extent of perhaps a whole year's crop. David was king, and in his seat of judgment he considered the matter so serious that he awarded the owner of the field the sheep themselves in compensation for his damage. The Roman law of the Twelve Tables might have approved of this decision, and on the same principle was built up the Deodand doctrine of English Law, now obsolete. His son Solomon, a mere boy of eleven, thought of a better decision, where the penalty would better fit the offence. The loss was the loss of the fruits or produce of the field or vineyard: the *corpus* of the property was not lost. Solomon's suggestion was that the owner of the field or vineyard should not take the sheep altogether but only detain them long enough to recoup his actual damage, from the milk, wool, and possibly young of the sheep, and then return the sheep to the shepherd. David's merit was that he accepted the suggestion, even though it came from a little boy: Solomon's merit was that he distinguished between *corpus* and income, and though a boy, was not ashamed to put his case before his father. But in either case it was God Who inspired the true realisation of justice. He was present and witnessed the affair, as He is present everywhere.

2733. Whatever is in the heavens and the earth celebrates the praises of God: xvii. 44; lviii. 1; xvi. 48-50. Even the "thunder repeateth His praises": xiii. 13. All nature ever sings the praises of God. David sang in his Psalms, cxlviii. 7-10: "Praise the Lord from the earth, ye... mountains and all hills; ...creeping things and flying fowl!" All nature sings to God's glory, in unison with David, and angels, and men of God. If the Jewish Talmudists take this literally, there is no need for Muslims to do so. Cf. also xxxiv. 10 and xxxviii. 18-19.

2734. The making of coats of mail is attributed to David. It is defensive armour, and therefore its discovery and supply is associated with deeds of righteousness and in xxxiv. 10-11, in contrast with the deadly weapons which man invents for offensive purposes. Indeed, all fighting, unless in defence of righteousness, is mere "violence."



For your benefit, to guard  
You from each other's violence :  
Will ye then be grateful ? <sup>2735</sup>

تَكْمُرُ بِمُحْصَنَاتِكُمْ مِنْ بَأْسِكُمْ قَبْلَ أَنْ تَنْتُمْ  
شَكَرُونَ ○

81. (It was Our power that  
Made) the violent (unruly)  
Wind flow (tamely) for  
Solomon, <sup>2736</sup>  
To his order, to the land <sup>2737</sup>  
Which We had blessed :  
For We do know all things.

٨١- وَلِإِسْلَامِينَ الرِّيحِ عَاصِفَةً  
تَجْرِي بِأَمْرِهِ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ الَّتِي بَرَكْنَا فِيهَا  
وَلَكُنَّا بِجَلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلَيْهِينَ ○

82. And of the evil ones,  
Were some who dived  
For him, and did other work <sup>2738</sup>  
Besides; and it was We  
Who guarded them.

٨٢- وَمِنَ الشَّيَاطِينِ مَنْ يَغُوصُونَ لَهُ  
وَيَعْمَلُونَ عَمَلًا دُونَ ذَلِكَ  
وَكُنَّا لَهُمْ حَافِظِينَ ○

83. And (remember) Job, when  
He cried to his Lord,  
"Truly distress has seized me, <sup>2739</sup>  
But Thou art the Most

٨٣- وَيَا أَيُّوبَ إِذْ نَادَى رَبَّهُ  
أَنِّي مَسْرُوعٌ الظُّرُورُ وَأَنْتَ

2735. David's good work then was : (1) he was open to learn wisdom wherever it came from ; (2) he sang the praises of God, in unison with all nature ; (3) he made defensive armour. But all these things he did, because of the faculties which God had given him, and we must be grateful for this and for all things to God.

2736. Cf. xxxiv. 12, and xxxviii. 36-38. This has been interpreted to mean that Solomon had miraculous power over the winds, and he could make them obey his orders. Rationalists say that he had naval power on the Mediterranean, and through the Gulf of 'Aqaba on the Red Sea, and that he therefore figuratively commanded the winds, and we may say the same of airmen at the present day. In any case the power behind was, and is, from God, Who has granted man intelligence and the faculties by which he can tame the more unruly forces of nature.

2737. Evidently Palestine, in which was Solomon's capital, though his influence extended far north in Syria, and perhaps far south in Arabia and Ethiopia. In the Roman ruins of Baalbek, fifty miles north of Damascus, is still shown a quarry of huge stones supposed to have been cut for Solomon. I have seen them with my own eyes. This local tradition is interesting, even if invented.

2738. As in n. 2736, the literalists and the rationalists take different views. The former say that Solomon had power over supernatural beings of evil, whom he compelled to dive for pearls and do other hard tasks. Rationalists refer this to hostile unruly races whom he subjected to his sway. It was God's power ultimately, Who granted him wisdom. Solomon tamed evil with Wisdom.

2739. Job (Aiyūb) was a prosperous man, with faith in God, living somewhere in the north-east corner of Arabia. He suffers from a number of calamities ; his cattle are destroyed, his servants slain by the sword, and his family crushed under his roof. But he holds fast to his faith in God. As a further calamity he is covered with loathsome sores from head to foot. He loses his peace of mind, and he curses the day he was born. His false friends come and attribute his afflictions to sin. These " Job's comforters " are no comforters at all, and he further loses his balance of mind, but God recalls to him all His mercies, and he resumes his humility and gives up self-justification. He is restored to prosperity, with twice as much as he had before ; his brethren and friends come back to him ; he had a new family of seven sons and three fair daughters. He lived to a good old age, and saw four generations of descendants. All this is recorded in the Book of Job in the Old Testament. Of all the Hebrew writings, the Hebrew of this Book comes nearest to Arabic.

Merciful of those that are  
Merciful."

84. So We listened to him :  
We removed the distress  
That was on him,  
And We restored his people  
To him, and doubled  
Their number,—as a Grace  
From Ourselves, and a thing  
For commemoration, for all  
Who serve Us.<sup>2740</sup>

85. And (remember) Ismā'il,<sup>2741</sup>  
Idris,<sup>2742</sup> and Zūl-kifl,<sup>2743</sup> all  
(Men) of constancy and patience;

86. We admitted them to  
Our Mercy: for they  
Were of the Righteous ones.

أَحْمَرُ الرَّحِيمِينَ ۝

۸۴- فَأَسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ فَكَشَفْنَا مَا بِهِ مِنْ ضِرٍّ  
وَأَتَيْنَاهُ أَهْلَهُ وَمِثْلَهُمْ مَعَهُمْ  
رَحْمَةً مِنَّا وَذِكْرًا  
لِّلْعَالَمِينَ ۝

۸۵- وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِدْرِيسَ وَذَا الْكِفْلِ  
كُلٌّ مِّنَ الصَّابِرِينَ ۝

۸۶- وَأَدْخَلْنَاهُمْ فِي رَحْمَتِنَا  
إِنَّهُمْ مِّنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ۝

2740. Job is the pattern of humility, patience, and faith in God. It was with these weapons that he fought and conquered evil.

2741. Ismā'il is mentioned specially, apart from the line which descended through Isaac (xxi. 72), as he was the founder of a separate and greater Ummat. His sufferings began in infancy (see n. 160 to ii. 158); but his steady constancy and submission to the will of God were specially shown when he earned the title of "Sacrifice to God" (see n. 2506 to xix. 54). That was the particular quality of his constancy and patience.

2742. For Idris see n. 2508 to xix. 56. He was in a high station in life, but that did not spoil him. He was sincere and true, and that was the particular quality of his constancy and patience.

2743. *Zul-kifl* would literally mean "possessor of, or giving, a double requital or portion"; or else, "one who used a cloak of double thickness," that being one of the meanings of *Kifl*. The Commentators differ in opinion as to who is meant, why the title is applied to him, and the point of his being grouped with Ismā'il and Idris for constancy and patience. I think the best suggestion is that afforded by Karsten Niebuhr in his *Reisebeschreibung nach Arabien*, Copenhagen, 1778, ii. 264-266, as quoted in the *Encyclopædia of Islam* under "*Dhul-Kifl*". He visited Meshed 'Alī in 'Irāq, and also the little town called Kefīl, midway between Najaf and Hilla (Babylon). Kefīl, he says, is the Arabic form of Ezekiel. The shrine of Ezekiel was there, and the Jews came to it on pilgrimage.

If we accept "*Zul-kifl*" to be not an epithet, but an Arabised form of "Ezekiel", it fits the context. Ezekiel was a prophet in Israel who was carried away to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar after his second attack on Jerusalem (about B. C. 599). His Book is included in the English Bible (Old Testament). He was chained and bound, and put into prison, and for a time he was dumb (Ezekiel, iii. 25-26). He bore all with patience and constancy, and continued to reprove boldly the evils in Israel. In a burning passage he denounces false leaders in words which are eternally true: "Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe ye with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken..." etc. (Ezekiel, xxxiv. 2-4).

*Zul-kifl* is again mentioned in xxxviii. 48 along with Ismā'il and Al-yasa'.

87. And remember *Zun-nūn*,<sup>2744</sup>  
When he departed in wrath:  
He imagined that We  
Had no power over him!  
But he cried through the depths  
Of darkness, "There is  
No god but Thou:  
Glory to Thee; I was  
Indeed wrong!"

88. So We listened to him:  
And delivered him from  
Distress: and thus do We  
Deliver those who have faith.

89. And (remember) *Zakariyā*,<sup>2745</sup>  
When he cried to his Lord:  
"O my Lord! leave me not  
Without offspring, though Thou  
Art the best of inheritors."<sup>2746</sup>

90. So We listened to him:  
And We granted him

٨٧- وَذَا النُّونِ إِذْ ذُهِبَ مُغَاضِبًا  
فَكَرَّ أَنْ لَنْ نَقْدِرَ عَلَيْهِ  
فَنَادَى فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ  
أَنْ لَوْلَا إِلَهِ إِلَّا أَنْتَ سُبْحَانَكَ  
إِنِّي كُنْتُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ۝

٨٨- فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ وَخَجَلْنَاهُ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ  
وَكَذَلِكَ نَجِي الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ۝

٨٩- وَذَكَرَ إِذْ نَادَى رَبَّهُ  
رَبِّ لَا تَذَرْني فَرْدًا  
وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْوَارِثِينَ ۝

٩٠- فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ

2744. *Zun-nūn*, "the man of the Fish or the Whale", is the title of *Jonah* (*Yūnus*), because he was swallowed by a large Fish or Whale. He was the prophet raised to warn the Assyrian capital Nineveh. For Nineveh see n. 1478 to x. 98. His story is told in xxxvii. 139-148. When his first warning was unheeded by the people, he denounced God's wrath on them. But they repented and God forgave them for the time being. *Jonah*, meanwhile, departed in wrath, discouraged at the apparent failure of his mission. He should have remained in the most discouraging circumstances, and relied on the power of God; for God had power both over Nineveh and over the Messenger He had sent to Nineveh. He went away to the sea and took a ship, but apparently the sailors threw him out as a man of bad omen in a storm. He was swallowed by a big Fish (or Whale), but in the depth of the darkness, he cried to God and confessed his weakness. The "darkness" may be interpreted both physically and spiritually: physically, as the darkness of the night and the storm and the Fish's body; spiritually as the darkness in his soul, his extreme distress in the situation which he had brought on himself. God Most Gracious forgave him. He was cast out ashore; he was given the shelter of a plant in his state of mental and physical lassitude. He was refreshed and strengthened, and the work of his mission prospered. Thus he overcame all his disappointment by repentance and Faith, and God accepted him.

2745. See xix. 2-15, and iii. 38-41. *Zakariyā* was a priest; both he and his wife were devout and punctilious in their duties. They were old, and they had no son. He was troubled in mind, not so much by the vulgar desire to have a son to carry on his line, but because he felt that his people were not unselfishly devout, and there would be no sincere work for God unless he could train up some one himself. He was given a son *Yaḥyā* (John the Baptist), who added to the devout reputation of the family, for he is called "noble, chaste, and a prophet" (iii. 39). All three, father, mother, and son, were made worthy of each other, and they repelled evil by their devout emulation in virtue.

2746. 'It is not that I crave a personal heir to myself: all things go back to Thee, and Thou art the best of inheritors: but I see no one around me sincere enough to carry on my work for Thee: wilt Thou give me one whom I can train?'



87. **And remember Zūn-nūn,**<sup>2744</sup>  
 When he departed in wrath:  
 He imagined that We  
 Had no power over him!  
 But he cried through the depths  
 Of darkness, "There is  
 No god but Thou:  
 Glory to Thee: I was  
 Indeed wrong!"

٨٤- وَذَا النُّونِ إِذْ ذَهَبَ مُغَاضِبًا  
 فَظَنَّ أَنْ لَنْ نَعْدِرَ عَلَيْهِ  
 فَنَادَى فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ  
 أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ سَمِعْنَاكَ  
 إِنِّي كُنْتُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ۝

88. So We listened to him:  
 And delivered him from  
 Distress: and thus do We  
 Deliver those who have faith.

٨٨- فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ وَخَلَّيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْعَمْرِ  
 وَكَذَلِكَ نُنْجِي الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ۝

89. **And (remember) Zakariya,**<sup>2745</sup>  
 When he cried to his Lord:  
 "O my Lord! leave me not  
 Without offspring, though Thou  
 Art the best of inheritors."<sup>2746</sup>

٨٩- وَذَكَرَ إِيمَانَ نَادَى رَبَّهُ  
 رَبِّ لَا تَذَرْنِي فَرْدًا  
 وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْوَارِثِينَ ۝

90. So We listened to him:  
 And We granted him

٩٠- فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ

2744. *Zūn-nūn*, "the man of the Fish or the Whale", is the title of Jonah (Yūnus), because he was swallowed by a large Fish or Whale. He was the prophet raised to warn the Assyrian capital Nineveh. For Nineveh see n. 1478 to x. 98. His story is told in xxxvii. 139-148. When his first warning was unheeded by the people, he denounced God's wrath on them. But they repented and God forgave them for the time being. Jonah, meanwhile, departed in wrath, discouraged at the apparent failure of his mission. He should have remained in the most discouraging circumstances, and relied on the power of God; for God had power both over Nineveh and over the Messenger He had sent to Nineveh. He went away to the sea and took a ship, but apparently the sailors threw him out as a man of bad omen in a storm. He was swallowed by a big Fish (or Whale), but in the depth of the darkness, he cried to God and confessed his weakness. The "darkness" may be interpreted both physically and spiritually: physically, as the darkness of the night and the storm and the Fish's body; spiritually as the darkness in his soul, his extreme distress in the situation which he had brought on himself. God Most Gracious forgave him. He was cast out ashore; he was given the shelter of a plant in his state of mental and physical lassitude. He was refreshed and strengthened, and the work of his mission prospered. Thus he overcame all his disappointment by repentance and Faith, and God accepted him.

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2746. 'It is not that I crave a personal heir to myself: all things go back to Thee, and Thou art the best of inheritors: but I see no one around me sincere enough to carry on my work for Thee: wilt Thou give me one whom I can train?'

Yahya: We cured his wife's<sup>2747</sup>  
(Barrenness) for him. These

(three)  
Were ever quick in emulation  
In good works: they used  
To call on Us with love  
And reverence, and humble  
themselves  
Before Us.

91. And (remember) her who<sup>2748</sup>  
Guarded her chastity:  
We breathed into her  
Of Our Spirit, and We  
Made her and her son  
A Sign for all peoples.

92. Verily, this Brotherhood  
Of yours is a single Brotherhood,<sup>2749</sup>  
And I am your Lord  
And Cherisher: therefore  
Serve Me (and no other).

93. But (later generations) cut off<sup>2750</sup>  
Their affair (of unity),  
One from another: (yet)  
Will they all return to Us.

يَحْيَىٰ وَأَصْلَحْنَا لَهُ زَوْجَهُ  
إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يُسْرِعُونَ فِي الْحَيْرَاتِ  
وَيَدْعُونَنَا رِعْبًا وَرَهْبًا  
وَكَانُوا لَنَا خُشْعِينَ ۝

٩١- وَالرَّحَىٰ أَحْصَيْتُ فَرْجَهَا  
فَقَفَّضْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ رُوحِنَا  
وَجَعَلْنَاهَا وَابْنَهَا آيَةً لِلْعَالَمِينَ ۝

٩٢- إِنَّ هَذِهِ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً  
وَإَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُونِ ۝

٩٣- وَتَقَطَّعُوا أَمْرَهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ  
كُلُّ الْإِنسَانِ رَاجِعٌ ۝

C. 150.—No good deed is fruitless: work  
(xxi. 94-112.) While yet there's time: for with Judgment  
The door will be closed to repentance.  
No false gods of fancy can help.

2747. *Aṣḥaḥa*—to improve, to mend, to reform to make better. Here, with reference to Zakariya's wife, the signification is twofold: (1) that her barrenness would be removed, so that she could become a mother; and (2) her spiritual dignity should be raised in becoming the mother of John the Baptist; and by implication his also, in becoming the father of John.

2748. Mary the mother of Jesus. Chastity was her special virtue: with a son of virgin birth, she and Jesus became a miracle to all nations. That was the virtue with which they (both Mary and Jesus) resisted evil.

2749. *Ummat*: this is best translated by Brotherhood here. "Community", "race", "nation", and "people" are words which import other ideas and do not quite correspond to "Ummat". "Religion" and "Way of Life" are derived meanings, which could be used in other passages, but are less appropriate here. Our attention has been drawn to people of very different temperaments and virtues, widely different in time, race, language, surroundings, history, and work to be performed, but forming the closest brotherhood as being men and women united in the highest service of God. They pre-figure the final and perfected Brotherhood of Islam.

2750. God's Message was and ever is one; and His Messengers treated it as one. It is people of narrower views who come later and trade on the earlier names, that break up the Message and the Brotherhood into jarring camps and sects.

The Righteous will have no fear; for them  
 The angelic greetings will truly open  
 A new world, which they will inherit.  
 This was God's Message of old, and the same  
 Is God's Message renewed: for God  
 Is one, and so is His Message, proclaimed  
 For all, freely and in loving Truth.

## SECTION 7.

94. ~~Who~~ whoever works any act  
 Of Righteousness and has Faith,—  
 His endeavour will not  
 Be rejected: We shall  
 Record it in his favour.<sup>2751</sup>

95. But there is a ban  
 On any population which  
 We have destroyed: for they<sup>2752</sup>  
 Shall not return,

96. Until the Gog and Magog (people)<sup>2753</sup>  
 Are let through (their barrier),  
 And they swiftly swarm  
 From every hill.

97. Then will the True Promise  
 Draw nigh (of fulfilment):  
 Then behold! the eyes  
 Of the Unbelievers will<sup>2754</sup>  
 Fixedly stare in horror: "Ah!  
 Woe to us! we were indeed  
 Heedless of this; nay, we  
 Truly did wrong!"

٩٤-مَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِنَ الصَّالِحَاتِ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ  
 فَلَا كُفْرَانَ لِسَعِيدِهِ  
 وَإِلَّا لَهُ كُتُبُونُ ○

٩٥-وَحَرَمٌ عَلَى قَرْيَةٍ  
 أَهْلَكْنَاهَا أَنَّهُمْ لَا يَرْجِعُونَ ○

٩٦-حَتَّىٰ إِذَا فُتِحَتْ يَأْجُوجُ وَمَأْجُوجُ  
 وَهُمْ مِنْ كُلِّ حَدَبٍ يَنْسِلُونَ ○

٩٧-وَاقْتَرَبَ الْوَعْدُ الْحَقِّ  
 فَإِذَا هِيَ شَاخِصَةٌ أَبْصَارِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا  
 يُوبِكُنَا قَدْ كُنَّا فِي غَفْلَةٍ مِنْ هَذَا  
 بَلْ كُنَّا ظَالِمِينَ ○

2751. God gives credit for every act of righteousness, however small: when combined with sincere Faith in God, it becomes the stepping stone to higher and higher things. It is never lost.

2752. But when wickedness comes to such a pass that the Wrath of God descends, as it did on Sodom, the case becomes hopeless. The righteous were warned and delivered before the Wrath descended. But those destroyed will not get another chance, as they flouted all previous chances. They will only be raised up at the approach of the Day of Judgment.

2753. For Gog and Magog see n. 2439 to xviii. 92. Their geographical position was discussed in Appendix VII to S. xviii. Here I do not think we are concerned with their geographical position. The name stands for wild and lawless tribes who will break their barriers and swarm through the earth. This will be one of the prognostications of the approaching Judgment.

2754. Cf. xiv. 42.

98. Verily ye, (Unbelievers),  
And the (false) gods that  
Ye worship besides God,  
Are (but) fuel for Hell!  
To it will ye (surely) come !
99. If these had been gods,  
They would not have got there!<sup>2755</sup>  
But each one will abide  
Therein.
100. There, sobbing will be  
Their lot, nor will they  
There hear (aught else).
101. Those for whom  
The Good (Record) from Us  
Has gone before, will be  
Removed far therefrom.<sup>2756</sup>
102. Not the slightest sound  
Will they hear of Hell:  
What their souls desired,  
In that will they dwell.
103. The Great Terror will<sup>2757</sup>  
Bring them no grief:  
But the angels will meet them  
(With mutual greetings):  
"This is your Day,—  
(The Day) that ye were promised."
- ٩٨- إِنْ كُمْ وَمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ  
حَصَبُ جَهَنَّمَ  
أَنْتُمْ لَهَا وَرَدُونَ
- ٩٩- لَوْ كَانَ هَؤُلَاءَ إِلَهًا مَّا وَرَدُوهَا  
وَكُلٌّ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ
- ١٠٠- لَهُمْ فِيهَا زَفِيرٌ  
وَهُمْ فِيهَا لَا يَسْمَعُونَ
- ١٠١- إِنَّ الَّذِينَ سَبَقَتْ لَهُمْ مِنَّا الْحُسْنَىٰ  
أُولَٰئِكَ عَنْهَا مُبْعَدُونَ
- ١٠٢- لَا يَسْمَعُونَ حَسِيسَةً وَهُمْ فِي مَا  
اشْتَهَتْ أَنْفُسُهُمْ خَالِدُونَ
- ١٠٣- لَا يَحْزَنُهُمُ الْفَزَعُ الْأَكْبَرُ  
وَتَتَلَفَتُهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ  
هَٰذَا يَوْمُكُمْ الَّذِي كُنْتُمْ تُوعَدُونَ

2755. The ultimate proof of Truth and Falsehood will be that Truth will endure and come to its own, while Falsehood will be destroyed. And so the men who worshipped Truth will come to their own, while those who worshipped Falsehood will be in a Fire of Punishment they could scarcely have imagined before. In that state there will be nothing but regrets and sighs and groans, and these evil sounds will drown everything else.

2756. In contrast to the misery of those who rejected Truth and Right, will be the happiness of those who accepted it. Their record does not lag behind: in fact it goes before. Our Deeds go before our journey in this life is completed. What then is the Judgment? It is instantaneous: it will all be decided in the twinkling of an eye (xvi. 77). The good will not hear the least sound of the groans of evil. Their true soul's desires will be fulfilled—not temporarily as in this world, but in a permanent form.

2757. The judgment and balancing of accounts will be a mighty Terror to the evil-doers. But it will cause, to the righteous, not grief or anxiety, but hope and happiness, for now they will be in a congenial atmosphere, and will see the fulfilment of their ideals in the meeting and greeting of the angels, preparatory to their enjoyment of the supreme Bliss—seeing the Face of God.



104. The Day that We roll up  
The heavens like a scroll  
Rolled up for books (completed),—  
Even as We produced  
The first Creation, so  
Shall We produce<sup>2758</sup>  
A new one: a promise  
We have undertaken:  
Truly shall We fulfil it.

١٠٤-يَوْمَ نَطْوِي السَّمَاءَ كَطَيِّ السِّجْلِ لِلْكِتَابِ  
كَمَا بَدَأْنَا أَوَّلَ خَلْقٍ نُعِيدُهُ  
وَعَدًا عَلَيْنَا  
إِنَّا كُنَّا فاعِلِينَ

105. Before this We wrote  
In the Psalms,<sup>2759</sup> after the Message  
(Given to Moses):<sup>2760</sup> "My  
servants,  
The righteous, shall inherit  
The earth."

١٠٥-وَلَقَدْ كَتَبْنَا فِي الزَّبُورِ  
مِنْ بَعْدِ الذِّكْرِ  
إِنَّ الْأَرْضَ يَرِثُهَا عِبَادِيَ الصَّالِحُونَ

106. Verily, in this (Qur-ān)  
Is a Message for people  
Who would (truly) worship  
God.<sup>2761</sup>

١٠٦-إِن فِي هَذَا الْبَيِّنَاتِ  
لِقَوْمٍ عَابِدِينَ

107. We sent thee not, but  
As a Mercy for all creatures.<sup>2762</sup>

١٠٧-وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

2758. The world—the universe—as we know it, will be folded up like a scroll of parchment, for it will have done its work. If God created all this world out of nothing, He can create an entirely new heaven and a new earth, on a plane of which we can form no conception in our present life. And He will do so, for that is His promise.

Some Commentators understand *Sijl* to be the name of the Recording Angel who closes the Book of a man's Deeds after the man's death.

2759. *Zabūr*: the Book of the Psalms of David. The name of David is expressly mentioned in connection with the *Zabūr* in iv. 163 and xvii. 55, although there the indefinite article is applied to the word as meaning a Book of Scripture. See Psalms xxv. 13, "his seed shall inherit the earth"; xxxvii. 11, "the meek shall inherit the earth" (quoted by Jesus in Matt. v. 3); and xxxvii. 29, "the righteous shall inherit the land." This may be understood both literally, as referring to power and authority on this earth, and figuratively, as referring to the new and real world of the spirit.

2760. The same promise occurs in the Pentateuch, Exod. xxxii. 13, "they shall inherit it (the land) for ever".

2761. The culmination of God's Revelation is in the Qur-ān, which confirms previous scriptures, corrects the errors which men introduced into them, and explains many points in detail for all who seek for right worship and service to God—whether they inherit the previous Books ("People of the Book") or not. It is a universal Message.

2762. There is no question now of race or nation, of a "chosen people" or the "seed of Abraham"; or the "seed of David"; or of Hindu Arya-varta; or of Jew or Gentile, Arab or 'Ajām (Persian), Turk or Tājik, European or Asiatic, White or Coloured; Aryan, Semitic, Mongolian, or African; or American, Australian, or Polynesian. To all men and creatures other than men who have any spiritual responsibility, the principles universally apply.

108. Say: "What has come to me  
By inspiration is that  
Your God is One God:  
Will ye therefore bow  
To His Will (in Islām)?" <sup>2763</sup>

١٠٨- قُلْ إِنَّمَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ  
إِلَهُكُمْ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ  
فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ ○

109. But if they turn back,  
Say: "I have proclaimed  
The Message to you all alike  
And in truth; but I  
Know not whether that  
Which ye are promised  
Is near or far." <sup>2764</sup>

١٠٩- فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقُلْ أَذُنُكُمْ  
عَلَىٰ سَوَاءٍ  
وَإِنْ أَذْرِي أَقْرَبُ  
أَمْ بَعِيدٌ مَّا تُوعَدُونَ ○

110. "It is He Who knows  
What is open in speech  
And what ye hide  
(In your hearts)." <sup>2765</sup>

١١٠- إِنَّهُ يَعْلَمُ الْجَهْرَ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ  
وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تَكْتُمُونَ ○

111. "I know not but that  
It may be a trial  
For you, and a grant  
Of (worldly) livelihood  
(To you) for a time." <sup>2766</sup>

١١١- وَإِنْ أَذْرِي لَعَلَّةٌ فَتْنَةٌ  
لَّكُمْ وَمَتَاعٌ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ ○

2763. 'Not my God only, but also *your* God; for there is but One God, the Universal Lord, Who made and loves and cherishes all.'

2764. 'If you do not realise the significance of the Message, I at least have done my duty. I have given the Good News for the Righteous and the Warning for the Unjust, without favour or partiality, and without abating one jot of the truth, openly and squarely for all. Do not ask me when the Good News and the Warning will be fulfilled. That is for God to decide, not for me or for you to know.'

2765. The Messenger of God freely and impartially teaches all how to carry out God's Will and live a good life. 'If some of them are hypocrites and come into the Ummat (Brotherhood) from baser motives and not the pure motives of the love of God, their motives and conduct will be judged by God and not by men.'

2766. In the same way if men who come into the Brotherhood from pure motives and yet feel aggrieved that those outside are better off from a worldly point of view, they are wrong. It may be that the fleeting enjoyment of this world's goods is but a trial, and they should be grateful for being saved from temptation.

112. Say : <sup>2767</sup> " O my Lord!  
 Judge Thou in truth! " <sup>2768</sup>  
 " Our Lord Most Gracious  
 Is the One Whose assistance  
 Should be sought against  
 The blasphemies ye utter! " <sup>2769</sup>

قُلْ رَّبِّ احْكُم بِالْحَقِّ  
 وَرَبُّنَا الرَّحْمَنُ الْمُسْتَعَانُ  
 عَلَى مَا تَصِفُونَ ۝



2767. See above, n. 2666 to xxi. 4. The better reading is "Say" in the imperative, rather than "He (the Prophet) said (or says)" in the indicative mood. Note that, on that construction, there are three distinct things which the Prophet is asked to say : viz. : (1) the statement in verses 109-111, addressed to those who turn away from the Message; (2) the prayer addressed to God in the first part of verse 112; and (3) the advice given indirectly to the Believers, in the second part of verse 112. I have marked these divisions by means of inverted commas.

2768. That is, God's judgment as between the Teacher and those who refuse his Message, or between the righteous and those who taunt them for their poverty, will be the true one, and both the Teacher and the Ummat must leave the judgment to God.

2769. Blasphemy is a dreadful sin. We must guard ourselves from it. But as regards others, if we cannot prevent it, we must pray to God for assistance and not rely upon carnal weapons.

INTRODUCTION TO SŪRA XXII (*Hajj*).

We now come to a new series of four Sūras, dealing with the environments and methods contributing to our spiritual progress, as the last five Sūras dealt with the Messengers who came in various ways to proclaim the Truth and conquer evil. See Introduction to S. xvii.

The subject-matter of this particular Sūra is concerned mainly with the spiritual implications of the Sacred House, the Pilgrimage, the Sacrifices, Striving and Fighting in defence of Truth when attacked, and other acts that make for Unselfishness and uproot Falsehood.

On the chronology of this Sūra, opinion is divided. Some parts were probably revealed in the later Meccan period, and some in Medina. But the chronological question has no significance here.

*Summary.*

Importance of the spiritual Future, and need of firmness in Faith : help for Truth and punishment for Evil (xxii. 1-25, and C. 151).

Purity, Prayer, Humility, and Faith are implied in the Pilgrimage ; in solemn Sacrifice we express our gratitude and reverence to God, and our desire to share food with our poorer brethren ; Striving and Fighting in defence of Truth when attacked are necessary as tests of self-sacrifice (xxii. 26-48, and C. 152).

The promptings of Evil may hinder the work of God's Apostle, but that work must triumph, and the Mercy and Truth of God must be established ; therefore serve God humbly, and He will protect and help you (xxii. 49-78, and C. 153).

C. 151.—Will not mankind take warning  
(xxii. 1-25.) From the dreadful consequences of Evil  
Clearly proclaimed to them ? Will they  
Dispute about God and the Life of the Future ?  
They have only to look around and within them,  
And they will see vestiges of the Plan  
And Purpose of God. Let them not halt  
Between Good and Evil : God's Message as well  
As His Messenger must win against all  
Obstacles. Only the evil will be brought  
To shame and agony. The good—whose speech  
Is pure and conduct worthy of praise—  
Will have a meed of refinement, beauty, and bliss.

## Sura XXII.

*Hajj, or The Pilgrimage.*

*In the name of God, Most Gracious,  
Most Merciful.*

1. ﴿٢٧٠﴾ mankind! Fear your Lord!  
For the convulsion of the Hour  
(Of Judgment) will be  
A thing terrible! <sup>2770</sup>

2. The Day ye shall see it,  
Every mother giving suck  
Shall forget her suckling-babe,  
And every pregnant female  
Shall drop her load (unformed):  
Thou shalt see mankind  
As in a drunken riot, <sup>2771</sup>  
Yet not drunk: but dreadful  
Will be the Wrath of God.

3. And yet among men  
There are such as dispute  
About God, without knowledge,  
And follow every evil one  
Obstinate in rebellion!

4. About the (Evil One)  
It is decreed that whoever  
Turns to him for friendship,  
Him will he lead astray,  
And he will guide him  
To the Penalty of the Fire. <sup>2772</sup>



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

١- يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ  
إِنَّ زَلْزَلَةَ السَّاعَةِ شَيْءٌ عَظِيمٌ ۝

٢- يَوْمَ تَرَوْهَا تَذْهَبُ كُلُّ مُرْضِعَةٍ عَمَّا  
أَرْضَعَتْ

وَتَضُمُّ كُلُّ ذَاتِ حَمْلٍ حَمْلَهَا  
وَتَرَى النَّاسَ سُكَارَىٰ وَمَا هُمْ بِسُكَارَىٰ  
وَلَكِنَّ عَذَابَ اللَّهِ شَدِيدٌ ۝

٣- وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يُجَادِلُ  
فِي اللَّهِ يَغْيِرُ عَلَيْهِ وَيَبْغِيهِ كُلَّ شَيْطَانٍ  
مُّرِيدٍ ۝

٤- كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِ أَنَّهُ مَن  
تَوَلَّاهُ فَأَنَّهُ يُضِلُّهُ  
وَيَهْدِيهِ إِلَىٰ عَذَابِ السَّعِيرِ ۝

2770. As an introduction to the spiritual meaning of various symbolical acts in this life, the serious issues involved are indicated by showing how terrible the consequences will be for those who disobey God's Will. The terror will only be for those who rebel and disobey: the righteous will not suffer from it, but on the contrary will be greeted by angels with joy (xxi. 103).

2771. Three metaphors are used for the extreme terror which the Awful Day will inspire. (1) No mother abandons the baby at her breast in the greatest danger; yet that will happen in this Dreadful Hour. (2) An expectant mother carries the young life within her with great pride and hope: "hope" is the actual word used in Urdu for this physical state; yet the terror will overpower the hope at this "Hour", and nature's working will be reversed. (3) Men ordinarily retain their self-possession except under intoxication: here, without intoxication, they will be driven to frenzy with terror.

2772. Even after the warnings there are men who are such fools as to turn away from God Who created them and cherishes them with His love and care; they become outlaws in His Kingdom, making friends with Evil, which is a rebel in God's Kingdom.

5. ⑤ mankind! if ye have  
 A doubt about the Resurrection,<sup>2773</sup>  
 (Consider) that We created you  
 Out of dust, then out of  
 Sperm, then out of a leech-like  
 Clot, then out of a morsel  
 Of flesh, partly formed<sup>2774</sup>  
 And partly unformed, in order  
 That We may manifest  
 (Our power) to you;  
 And We cause whom We will<sup>2775</sup>  
 To rest in the wombs  
 For an appointed term,  
 Then do We bring you out  
 As babes, then (foster you)  
 That ye may reach your age  
 Of full strength; and some  
 Of you are called to die,  
 And some are sent back  
 To the feeblest old age,  
 So that they know nothing  
 After having known (much).<sup>2776</sup>  
 And (further), thou seest  
 The earth barren and lifeless,  
 But when We pour down  
 Rain on it, it is stirred  
 (To life), it swells,  
 And it puts forth every kind  
 Of beautiful growth (in pairs).<sup>2777</sup>

هَآءِهِمُ النَّاسُ إِن كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّنَ الْبَعْثِ  
 فَإِنَّا خَلَقْنَاهُ مِن نُّرَابٍ  
 ثُمَّ مِّنْ تُطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ مِّنْ عَلَقَةٍ  
 ثُمَّ مِّنْ مُّضْغَةٍ مُّخَلَّقَةٍ  
 وَغَيْرِ مُخَلَّقَةٍ لِّنُبَيِّنَ لَكُمْ  
 وَنُقَرِّئَ فِي الْأَرْحَامِ مَا نَشَاءُ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى  
 ثُمَّ نُخْرِجُكُمْ طِفْلًا ثُمَّ لَتَبْتُمْ أَفْئِدَةً أَشَدَّكُمْ  
 وَمِمَّنْكُمْ مَّنْ يُتَوَقَّى  
 وَمِمَّنْكُمْ مَّنْ يُرَدُّ إِلَىٰ أَرْدَلِ الْعُصْرِ  
 لِكَيْلَا يَعْلَمَ مِن بَعْدِ عِلْمٍ شَيْئًا  
 وَتَرَىٰ الْأَرْضَ هَامِدَةً  
 فَإِذَا أَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْهَا الْمَاءَ  
 اهْتَزَّتْ وَرَبَتْ  
 وَأَبْتَتْ مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجٍ بَیْجٍ ۝

2773. If they really have doubts in their minds about the life after death, they have only to turn their attention, either to their own nature, or to the nature around. How wonderful is their own physical growth, from lifeless matter, to seed, fertilised ovum, foetus, child, youth, age, and death! How can they doubt that the Author of all these wonderful stages in their life here can also give them another kind of life after the end of this life? Or, if they look at external nature, they see the earth dead and barren, and God's fertilising showers bring it to life, growth, and beauty in various forms. The Creator of this great pageant of Beauty can surely create yet another and a newer world.

2774. The stages of man's physical growth from nothing till he completes the cycle of this life are described in words whose accuracy, beauty, and comprehensiveness can only be fully understood by biologists. Parallel to the physical growth, may be understood man's inner growth, also by stages and by God's creative artistry.

2775. That is, a male or a female child, a fair or an ugly child, a good or a rebellious child, etc., involving countless mysteries of genetics and heredity.

2776. Cf. xvi. 70. In that passage the mystery of our life was used to illustrate God's abundant mercies and favours to us. Here it is used to illustrate God's power in giving us a future Life of even greater promise.

2777. A beautiful nature passage so pregnant in meaning that the earnest student wonders what magic and truth have been conveyed in so few words. M. P.'s Egyptian colleague, Prof. Ghamrawi (see M. P.'s note on this passage) was but expressing the feelings of every careful student of the Qur-ān. The "subtlety and wealth of meaning" are indeed marvellous.

6. This is so, because God  
Is the Reality: it is He  
Who gives life to the dead,  
And it is He Who has  
Power over all things.<sup>2778</sup>
7. And verily the Hour will come:  
There can be no doubt  
About it, or about (the fact)  
That God will raise up  
All who are in the graves.
8. Yet there is among men  
Such a one as disputes  
About God, without knowledge,  
Without guidance, and without  
A Book of Enlightenment,<sup>2779</sup>
9. (Disdainfully) bending his side,  
In order to lead (men) astray  
From the Path of God:  
For him there is disgrace<sup>2780</sup>  
In this life, and on the Day  
Of Judgment We shall  
Make him taste the Penalty  
Of burning (Fire).
10. (It will be said): "This is  
Because of the deeds which  
Thy hands sent forth,  
For verily God is not  
Unjust to His servants."<sup>2781</sup>

٦- ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ  
وَأَنََّّهُ يُحْيِي الْمَوْتَى  
وَأَنََّّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ۝  
٧- وَأَنَّ السَّاعَةَ آتِيَةٌ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهَا  
وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ يَبْعَثُ مَنْ فِي الْقُبُورِ ۝  
٨- وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يُجَادِلُ فِي اللَّهِ بِغَيْرِ  
عِلْمٍ  
وَلَا هُدًى وَلَا كِتَابٍ مُنِيرٍ ۝  
٩- تَأْتِي عِظْفُهُ لِيُضِلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ  
لَهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا خِزْيٌ وَنَذِيرُهُ يَوْمَ  
الْقِيَامَةِ عَذَابُ الْحَرِيقِ ۝

١٠- ذَلِكَ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ يَدَاكَ  
وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَيْسَ بِظَلَّامٍ لِّلْعَمِيدِ ۝

2778. All these beautiful and well-articulated pageants of life and nature point to the Reality behind them, i.e., God. They will perish, but He is eternal. They are but shadows; the substance (if such a word may be used) is in Him. They are shifting and illusory, in the sense that they have neither permanency nor independent existence. But they have a sort of secondary reality in the sense in which a shadow is a real reflection from a substance. No Power or Existence has any meaning except as a reflection of God's ineffable Glory.

2779. For "Book of Enlightenment" see iii. 184 and n. 490. I understand "knowledge" to mean here their human knowledge or intelligence, "guidance" to mean divine guidance, such as comes from God or men of God or a revelation from God, and the "Book of Enlightenment" to mean the fundamental guide to good conduct, the clear rules laid down in all Dispensations to help men to lead good lives. The "Book of Enlightenment" may mean a revealed Book in which case "Guidance" would refer to divine guidance through a man of God.

2780. Some Commentators think this refers to Abū Jahl, but the words are perfectly general, and this type of man is common in all ages. The same may be said about verse 3 above: Commentators give the immediate reference to one Naḍḥar ibn Ḥarith.

2781. 'What you suffer is the consequence of your own sinful deeds; God is just; He is not unjust to the least of His creatures.'

## SECTION 2.

11. **There** are among men  
Some who serve God,  
As it were, on the verge: <sup>2782</sup>  
If good befalls them, they are,  
Therewith, well content; but  
If a trial comes to them,  
They turn on their faces:  
They lose both this world  
And the Hereafter: that  
Is loss for all to see!

12. They call on such deities, <sup>2783</sup>  
Besides God, as can neither  
Hurt nor profit them:  
That is straying far indeed  
(From the Way)!

13. (Perhaps) they call on one  
Whose hurt is nearer <sup>2784</sup>  
Than his profit: evil, indeed,  
Is the patron, and evil  
The companion (for help)!

14. **Verily** God will admit  
Those who believe and work  
Righteous deeds, to Gardens,  
Beneath which rivers flow:  
For God carries out  
All that He plans. <sup>2785</sup>

١١- وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَعْبُدُ اللَّهَ عَلَى حَرْفٍ  
فَإِنْ أَصَابَهُ خَيْرٌ اطْمَأَنَّ بِهِ  
وَإِنْ أَصَابَتْهُ فِتْنَةٌ انْقَلَبَ عَلَى وَجْهِهِ  
خَسِرَ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةَ  
ذَٰلِكَ هُوَ الْخُسْرَانُ الْمُبِينُ ○

١٢- يَدْعُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا  
يَنْفَعُهُمْ وَمَا لَا يَنْصُرُهُمْ  
ذَٰلِكَ هُوَ الضَّلَالُ الْبُعِيدُ ○

١٣- يَدْعُوا لَمَن ضَرُّهُ أَقْرَبُ مِنْ نَفْعِهِ  
لَيْسَ الْمَوْلَىٰ وَلَيْسَ الْعَشِيرُ ○

١٤- إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَدْخُلُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا  
الْصَّالِحَاتِ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ  
إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَفْعَلُ مَا يُرِيدُ ○

2782. They are men whose minds are not firm: they will have faith, if all goes well with them, but as soon as they are tried, they are found wanting. They are a different kind from hypocrites. It is not fraud or double-dealing that is their sin: it is a weak mind, petty standards, of judging right by success, a selfishness that gives nothing but asks for all, a narrow-mindedness that does not go beyond petty mundane calculations—a "nicely calculated less or more" of the good things of this world. They fail in both worlds, and their failure in this world is patent for every on-looker.

2783. To such minds religion does not mean high endeavour, self-sacrifice for noble ends, the recognition of God's infinite world, but just a small concession to formalism, perhaps a present to an idol (literal or figurative), perhaps attendance at worship if it can be done without trouble! It is false gods they worship, and the more they worship, the more they stray.

2784. Such false worship is not always neutral, bringing neither harm nor good. Perhaps the harm comes first, and there is no help from God. Such minds are themselves demoralised, and render themselves unfit for help!

2785. God is both true to His promise, and He has power to give full effect to His Will and Plan



15. If any think that God  
Will not help him  
(His Apostle) in this world  
And the Hereafter, let him  
Stretch out a rope  
To the ceiling and cut (himself) <sup>2786</sup>  
Off: then let him see  
Whether his plan will remove  
That which enrages (him)!

١٥- مَنْ كَانَ يَظُنُّ أَنَّ لَنْ يَنْصُرَهُ اللَّهُ  
فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ  
فَلْيَسْتَدِرْ سَبَبًا إِلَى السَّمَاءِ ثُمَّ لْيَقْطَعْ  
فَلْيَنْظُرْ هَلْ يُدْهِبُ كَيْدَهُ مَا يَغِيظُ ○

16. Thus have We sent down <sup>2787</sup>  
Clear Signs; and verily  
God doth guide whom  
He will!

١٦- وَكَذَلِكَ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ آيَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ  
وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يَهْدِي مَنْ يُرِيدُ ○

17. Those who believe (in the Qur-ān),  
Those who follow the Jewish  
(scriptures),  
And the Sabians, <sup>2788</sup> Christians,  
Magians, <sup>2789</sup> and Polytheists,—  
God will judge between them

١٧- إِنَّ الدِّينَ أَمْنٌ وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا  
وَالطَّيِّبِينَ وَالنَّصَارَى وَالْمَجُوسَ وَالَّذِينَ  
أَشْرَكُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَفْصِلُ بَيْنَهُمْ

2786. There is some difference of opinion as to the interpretation of this verse. Most Commentators are agreed that the pronoun "him" in the second line ("will not help him") refers to the holy Prophet, and that the "any" in the first line refers to his enemies, who wished to see him destroyed and removed from the scene of his labours. Ibn 'Abbās, whom I have followed here, and whom a great number of Commentators follow, construes the later clauses in the sense given in the text. Freely paraphrased, it means: if the enemies of God's Apostle are enraged at his successes, let them fix a rope to their ceiling and hang themselves. *Samāa* is thus rendered by the word "ceiling". If *Samāa* is rendered by the word "heaven" (the usual meaning), the paraphrase would be: if the enemies of God's Apostle are enraged at the help he gets from heaven, let them stretch a rope to heaven and see if they can cut off the help in that way!—in other words, they are fools if they think they can intercept God's help by their petty devices!

2787. Instead of plotting against God's Messenger, the Unbelievers should observe the Clear Signs which he has brought, and obey and follow the Guidance which comes from God according to the Laws which He has fixed by His holy Will and Plan.

2788. For Sabians, see n. 76 to ii. 62. They are also referred to in v. 72. In both those passages the Muslims are mentioned with the Jews, Christians, and Sabians, as receiving God's protection and mercy. Here, besides the four religions, there is further mention of Magians and Polytheists: it is not said that they would receive God's Mercy, but only that God will judge between the various forms of faith. The addition of Polytheists—those who join gods with God—may seem a little surprising. But the argument is that all forms of faith that are sincere (and not merely contumacious) are matters in which we as men cannot interfere. Our duty is to be tolerant within all the limits of tolerance—i.e., so long as there is no oppression, injustice, and persecution. Where we can right an obvious wrong, it is our duty to do so; but it would be wrong on our part to rush in without power or authority simply because other people do not see our point of view.

2789. This is the only place where the Magians (*Majūs*) are mentioned in the Qur-ān. Their cult is a very ancient one. They consider Fire as the purest and noblest element, and worship it as a fit emblem of God. Their location was the Persian and Median uplands and the Mesopotamian valleys. Their religion was reformed by the Prophet Zardusht (date uncertain, about B.C. 600?). Their scripture is the Zend-Avesta, the bible of the Pārsis. They were "the Wise men of the East" mentioned in the Gospels.

On the Day of Judgment:  
For God is witness  
Of all things.

18. Seest thou not that  
To God bow in worship  
All things that are  
In the heavens and on earth,—<sup>2790</sup>  
The sun, the moon, the stars;  
The hills, the trees, the animals;  
And a great number among  
Mankind? But a great number  
Are (also) such as are  
Fit for Punishment: and such  
As God shall disgrace,—  
None can raise to honour:  
For God carries out  
All that He wills.<sup>2791</sup>
19. These two antagonists dispute<sup>2792</sup>  
With each other about their Lord:  
But those who deny (their Lord),—  
For them will be cut out  
A garment of Fire:  
Over their heads will be  
Poured out boiling water.
20. With it will be scalded  
What is within their bodies,  
As well as (their) skins.<sup>2793</sup>
21. In addition there will be  
Maces of iron (to punish) them.<sup>2794</sup>

يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ  
شَهِيدٌ ۝

١٨- أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَسْجُدُ لَهُ  
مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ  
وَالْحُمْسُ وَالْعُمْرُ وَالْجِبَالُ وَالشَّجَرُ  
وَالْدَّابُّ وَكَثِيرٌ مِّنَ النَّاسِ وَكَثِيرٌ  
حَقٌّ عَلَيْهِ الْعَذَابُ  
وَمَنْ يُهِنِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ مُّكْرِمٍ  
إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَفْعَلُ مَا يَشَاءُ ۝

١٩- هَٰذَانِ خَصْمَانِ اخْتَصَمُوا فِي رَبِّهِمْ  
فَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا قُطِعَتْ لَهُمْ  
ثِيَابُ نَارٍ  
يُصَبُّ مِنْ فَوْقِ رُؤُوسِهِمُ الْحَمِيمُ  
٢٠- يُصْهَرُ بِهِ مَا فِي بُطُونِهِمْ وَالْجُلُودُ ۝

٢١- وَلَهُمْ مَّقَامِعٌ مِنْ حديدٍ ۝

2790. Cf. xxi. 79, and n. 2733. All created things, animate and inanimate, depend on God for their existence, and this dependence can be construed as their *Sijda* or bowing in worship. Their very existence proclaims their dependence. How can they be objects of worship? For *haqqa* in this verse, Cf. xv. 64, n. 1990.

2791. Cf. xxii. 16. There the argument was that those who work in harmony with God's Law and Will will get their reward, for God always carries out His Plan. Here is the parallel argument: those who defy God's Will must suffer pain and disgrace, for God is well able to carry out His Will.

2792. Two antagonists: i.e., parties of antagonists, viz., Men of Faith, who confess their Lord and seek to carry out His Will, and Men who deny their Lord and defy His Will.

2793. The punishment, expressed in physical terms, will be all-pervading, not merely superficial.

2794. Read this with the next verse. There will be no escape from the final Punishment adjudged after the time of repentance is past.

22. Every time they wish  
To get away therefrom,  
From anguish, they will be  
Forced back therein, and  
(It will be said), "Taste ye  
The Penalty of Burning!"

## SECTION 3.

23. God will admit those  
Who believe and work righteous  
deeds,  
To Gardens beneath which<sup>2795</sup>  
Rivers flow: they shall be  
Adorned therein with bracelets  
Of gold and pearls; and  
Their garments there  
Will be of silk.
24. For they have been guided  
(In this life) to the purest  
Of speeches; they have been  
Guided to the Path of Him  
Who is Worthy of (all) Praise.
25. As to those who reject  
(God), and keep back (men) from  
The Way of God, and  
From the Sacred Mosque, which  
We have made (open) to (all) men—  
Equal is the dweller there  
And the visitor from the country—  
And any whose purpose therein  
Is profanity or wrong-doing—<sup>2796</sup>  
Them will We cause to taste  
Of a most grievous Penalty.

۲۲- كُلَّمَا أَرَادُوا أَنْ يَخْرُجُوا مِنْهَا  
مِنْ غَيْرِ أَعِيدُوا فِيهَا  
وَذُوقُوا عَذَابَ الْحَرِيقِ ۝

۲۳- إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُدْخِلُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا  
الطَّاهِرَاتِ  
جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ  
يُحَاكُونَ فِيهَا مِنْ أَسَاوِرَ مِنْ ذَهَبٍ وَ  
لُؤْلُؤًا وَلباسًا مِمَّ فِيهَا خَيْرٌ ۝  
۲۴- وَهَذَا إِلَى الطَّيِّبِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ ۝  
وَهَذَا إِلَى صِرَاطِ الْحَيِّدِ ۝

۲۵- إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَيَصُدُّونَ عَنْ  
سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ  
وَالْمَسْجِدِ الْكَرَامِ الَّذِي جَعَلْنَاهُ لِلنَّاسِ  
سَوَاءً الْعَاكِفُ فِيهِ وَالْبَادِ  
وَمَنْ يُؤْذِ فِيهِ بِالْكُلَّةِ يُلْطَمِ  
ثِنَّةً مِنْ عَذَابِ آلِهِهِ ۝

C. 152.—For our spiritual growth are provided  
(xxii. 26-48.) Symbols and means of expression in our ordinary  
Lives. Such is the pilgrimage, meant  
To gather men and women from far and near

2795. In xxii. 14 above, was described the meed of the Righteous as compared with the time-servers and those who worshipped false gods (vv. 11-13): here we have the case of those who were persecuted, abused, prevented from entering the Ka'ba and deprived of all that makes life smooth, agreeable, and comfortable. For them the meed is described in metaphors that negative these afflictions: costly adornments (as against being stripped of home and property), purity of speech (as against the abuse they received), the Path of the Lord of Praise (as against the fierce and malignant persecution to which they were subjected).

2796. All these were enormities of which the Pagan clique in power in Mecca before and during the Hijrat were guilty.

To share in sacrifice, and prayer and praise,  
 In an age-old centre of worship. The sacrifices,  
 Too, are symbols of Piety of Heart,  
 A longing to share with fellow-men  
 In the bounties of God. In the Fight for Truth  
 Is tested our purity of motive, unselfishness  
 Of aim, and devotion to Right at the cost  
 Of Self. Fearless must we fight; for Truth  
 Has often been flouted, but must finally win.

## SECTION 4.

26. Behold! We gave the site,<sup>2797</sup>  
 To Abraham, of the (Sacred)  
 House,  
 (Saying): "Associate not anything  
 (In worship) with Me;  
 And sanctify My House  
 For those who compass it  
 round,<sup>2798</sup>

Or use it as a dwelling,  
 Or bow, or prostrate themselves  
 (Therein in prayer).

27. "And proclaim the Pilgrimage  
 Among men: they will come  
 To thee on foot and (mounted)  
 On every kind of camel,  
 Lean on account of journeys  
 Through deep and distant  
 Mountain highways;<sup>2799</sup>

28. "That they may witness  
 The benefits (provided) for them,<sup>2800</sup>

٢٦- وَإِذْ بَوَّأْنَا لِإِبْرَاهِيمَ مَكَانَ الْبَيْتِ  
 أَنْ لَا تُشْرِكْ بِي شَيْئًا  
 وَطَهِّرْ بَيْتِيَ لِلطَّائِفِينَ  
 وَالْقَائِمِينَ وَالرُّكَّعِ السُّجُودِ ○

٢٧- وَأَذِّنْ فِي النَّاسِ بِالْحَجِّ  
 يَأْتُوكَ رِجَالًا وَعَلَى كُلِّ ضَامِرٍ  
 يَأْتِينَ مِنْ كُلِّ فَجٍّ عَمِيقٍ ○

٢٨- لِيَشْهَدُوا مَنَافِعَ لَهُمْ

2797. The site of Mecca was granted to Abraham (and his son Ismā'il) for a place of worship that was to be pure (without idols, the worship being paid to the One True God) and universal, without being reserved (like Solomon's Temple of later times) to any one People or Race.

2798. Cf. ii. 125. Note that here the word *qā'imīn* ('who use it as a dwelling') occurs in place of *'āshifīn* (who use it as a retreat). In practice the meaning is the same. Those who go for a retreat to the Ka'ba stay there for the time being. Or it may be, that *qā'imīn* refers to the posture of standing in prayer.

2799. When the Pilgrimage was proclaimed, people came to it from every quarter, near and far, on foot and mounted. The "lean camel" coming after a fatiguing journey through distant mountain roads typifies the difficulties of travel, which Pilgrims disregard on account of the temporal and spiritual benefits referred to in the next verse.

2800. There are benefits both for this our material life and for our spiritual life. Of the former kind are those associated with social intercourse which furthers trade and increases knowledge. Of the latter kind are the opportunities of realising some of our spiritual yearnings in sacred associations that go back to the most ancient times. Of both kinds may be considered the opportunities which the Pilgrimage provides for strengthening our international Brotherhood.

And celebrate the name  
Of God, through the Days<sup>2801</sup>  
Appointed, over the cattle<sup>2802</sup>  
Which He has provided for them  
(For sacrifice): then eat ye  
Thereof and feed the distressed  
Ones in want.

29. "Then let them complete  
The rites prescribed<sup>2803</sup>  
For them, perform their vows,<sup>2804</sup>  
And (again) circumambulate  
The Ancient House."

30. Such (is the Pilgrimage):  
Whoever honours the sacred  
Rites of God, for him  
It is good in the sight  
Of his Lord. Lawful to you  
(For food in Pilgrimage) are cattle,  
Except those mentioned to you<sup>2805</sup>  
(As exceptions): but shun  
The abomination of idols,  
And shun the word  
That is false,—

31. Being true in faith to God,  
And never assigning partners

وَيَذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ فِي أَيَّامٍ مَعْلُومَاتٍ  
عَلَى مَا رَزَقَهُمْ مِنْ بَهِيمَةِ الْأَنْعَامِ  
فَكُلُوا مِنْهَا وَأَطْعَمُوا الْبَائِسَ الْفَقِيرَ

٢٩- ثُمَّ لْيَقْضُوا تَفَثَهُمْ وَلْيُوفُوا ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ  
وَلْيَطَّوُّوا بِالْبَيْتِ الْعَتِيقِ ○

٣٠- ذَلِكَ وَمَنْ يُعْظَمْ حُرْمَتِ اللَّهِ  
فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ  
وَأُحِلَّتْ لَكُمُ الْأَنْعَامُ  
إِلَّا مَا يُشْبِلُ عَلَيْكُمْ  
فَاجْتَنِبُوا الرِّجْسَ مِنَ الْأَوْثَانِ  
وَاجْتَنِبُوا قَوْلَ الزُّوْرِ ○

٣١- حُنَفَاءَ لِلَّهِ غَيْرَ مُشْرِكِينَ

2801. The three special days of Hajj are the 8th, 9th, and 10th of the month of Zul-hajj, and the two or three subsequent days of Tashriq: see the rites explained in n. 217 to ii. 197. But we may ordinarily include the first ten days of Zul-hajj in the term.

2802. The great day of commemorative Sacrifice ('Id-ul-Adhha) is the 10th of Zul-hajj: the meat then killed is meant to be eaten for food and distributed to the poor and needy. In present conditions, where much of it is wasted on the spot, it would be a good thing if the surplus meat were canned and utilised for export, or if the sacrifice were performed in some other form approved by due authority. *Bahimat* means animal generally; *an'am* means cattle specifically used for meat, and here for sacrifice.

2803. *Tajath*—the superfluous growth on one's body, such as nails, hair, etc., which it is not permitted to remove in *hram*. These may be removed on the 10th day, when the Hajj is completed: that is the rite of completion.

2804. The spirit of the Pilgrimage is not completed by the performance of the outward rites. The Pilgrim should carry in mind some vow of spiritual service and endeavour to perform it. Then comes the final *Tawaf*.

2805. The general food prohibitions will be found in ii. 173, v. 4-5, and vi. 121, 138-146. They are meant for health and cleanliness, but the worst abominations to shun are those of false worship and false speech. Here the question is about food during Pilgrimage. Lawful meat but not game is allowed.

To Him : if anyone assigns  
Partners to God, he is  
As if he had fallen  
From heaven and been snatched up  
By birds, or the wind  
Had swooped (like a bird  
On its prey) and thrown him  
Into a far-distant place.<sup>2806</sup>

32. Such (is his state) : but  
If any wish to give more  
(Animals than usual for sacrifice),  
By way of Symbols to God,<sup>2807</sup>  
They would come truly  
From the piety  
Of their hearts.

33. In them<sup>2808</sup> ye have benefits  
For a term appointed :  
In the end their place  
Of sacrifice is near<sup>2809</sup>  
The Ancient House.

#### SECTION 5.

34. ~~No~~ To every people did We  
Appoint rites (of sacrifice),  
That they might celebrate  
The name of God over

بِهِ وَمَنْ يُشْرِكْ بِاللّٰهِ  
فَكَأَنَّمَا خُذَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ  
فَقُطِعَ فَوْقَهُ الظِّلُ  
أَوْ تَهْوَىٰ بِهِ الرِّيحُ فِي مَكَانٍ سَحِينٍ ٥

٣٢- ذَلِكَ وَمَنْ يُعْظِمْ  
شَعَائِرَ اللّٰهِ  
فَأَنَّهُمْ مِنَ تَقْوَى الْقُلُوبِ ٥

٣٣- لَكُمْ فِيهَا مَنَافِعُ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى  
ثُمَّ يَحْمِلُهَا إِلَىٰ الْبَيْتِ الْعَتِيقِ ٥

٣٤- وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ جَعَلْنَا مَنَسَكًا  
لِّيَذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللّٰهِ عَلَىٰ مَا رَزَقَهُمْ

2806. A parable full of meaning. The man who falls from the worship of the One True God is like a man who falls from heaven. His being taken up with false objects of worship is like the falling man being picked up in the air by birds of prey. But the false objects of worship cannot hold him permanently in their grip. A fierce blast of wind—the Wrath of God—comes and snatches him away and throws him into a place far, far away from any place he could have imagined—into the hell of those who defied God.

2807. *Sha'ā'ir*, symbols, signs, marks by which something is known to belong to some particular body of men, such as flags. In ii. 158 the word was applied to *Safā* and *Marwa*: see n. 160 there. Here it seems to be applied to the rites of sacrifice. If anyone, from heartfelt piety, wishes to increase the number of animals he brings for sacrifice, his offers only show or should show his devotion.

2808. *In them*: in cattle, or animals offered for sacrifice. It is quite true that they are useful in many ways to man, e.g., camels in desert countries are useful as mounts or for carrying burdens, or for giving milk, and so for horses and oxen, and camels and oxen are also good for meat, and camel's hair can be woven into cloth; goats and sheep also yield milk and meat, and hair or wool. But if they are used for sacrifice, they become symbols by which men show that they are willing to give up some of their own benefits for the sake of satisfying the needs of their poorer brethren.

2809. *Ilā*=towards, near. The actual sacrifice is not performed in the Ka'ba, but at Minā, five or six miles off, where the Pilgrims encamp: see n. 217 to ii. 197. *Thumma*=then, finally, in the end; i.e., after all the rites have been performed, *Tawāf*, *Safā* and *Marwa*, and 'Arafāt.

The sustenance He gave them  
From animals (fit for food).<sup>2810</sup>  
But your God is One God :  
Submit then your wills to Him  
(In Islām) : and give thou  
The good news<sup>2811</sup> to those  
Who humble themselves, —

مِنْ يَهَيِّمُوا الْأَنْعَامَ  
فَالْهَكَمُ إِلَهُ وَاحِدٌ فَلَا أَسْمُؤُا  
وَبَشِّرِ الضَّعِيفِينَ ۝

35. To those whose hearts,  
When God is mentioned,  
Are filled with fear,  
Who show patient perseverance  
Over their afflictions, keep up  
Regular prayer, and spend  
(In charity) out of what  
We have bestowed upon them.<sup>2812</sup>

۝-۳۵ الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ  
وَالصَّابِرِينَ عَلَى مَا أَصَابَهُمْ  
وَالْبَاقِينَ الصَّلَاةَ  
وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ ۝

36. ~~THE~~ The sacrificial camels  
We have made for you  
As among the Symbols from  
God: in them is (much)  
Good for you: then pronounce  
The name of God over them  
As they line up (for sacrifice) :<sup>2813</sup>  
When they are down  
On their sides (after slaughter),  
Eat ye thereof, and feed  
Such as (beg not but)  
Receive gifts with gratitude,<sup>2814</sup>  
And such as beg  
With due humility: thus have

۝-۳۶ وَالْبِذْنَ جَعَلْنَاهَا لَكُمْ  
مِنْ شَعَائِرِ اللَّهِ  
لَكُمْ فِيهَا خَيْرٌ  
فَاذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهَا صَوَافٍ  
فَإِذَا وَجَبَتْ جُنُوبُهَا  
فَكُلُوا مِنْهَا وَأَطْعَمُوا  
الْعَائِيَةَ وَالْمُسْتَضْرَّكَ لَكَ

2810. This is the true end of sacrifice, not propitiation of higher powers, for God is One, and He does not delight in flesh or blood (xxii. 37), but a symbol of thanksgiving to God by sharing meat with fellow-men. The solemn pronouncement of God's name over the sacrifice is an essential part of the rite.

2811. *The good news*: i.e. the Message of God, that He will accept in us the sacrifice of self for the benefit of our fellow-men.

2812. Some qualities of God's devotees are mentioned here, in ascending order: (1) Humility before God makes them receptive, and prepares them to listen to God's Message; (2) fear of God, which is akin to love, touches their heart, and penetrates through their inmost being; (3) they are not afraid of anything in mortal life; they take their trials patiently, and they go on in a course of righteousness with constancy; (4) their prayer now is not a matter of form, but a real communion with God, with a sense of confidence such as a faithful servant feels in the presence of a kind and loving master; and (5) gratitude to God, as shown by practical acts of charity to all fellow-creatures.

2813 See n. 2808 to xxii. 34 above. What was expressed in general terms is applied here more particularly to camels, the most precious and useful animals of Arabia, whose mode of slaughter for sacrifice is different from that of smaller animals: the special word for such sacrifice is *Nahr* (cviii. 2).

2814. There are ethics in begging, as in charity. No approval is given to arrogant and insolent begging, though the relief of distress of all kinds, deserved and undeserved, is included in charity. But those who beg with humility and those who receive gifts with gratitude and contentment are both mentioned for special attention. Charity should not be given for show, or to get rid of importunate demands. It should find out real needs and meet them.

We made animals subject  
To you, that ye  
May be grateful.

37. It is not their meat  
Nor their blood, that reaches  
God: it is your piety  
That reaches Him: He  
Has thus made them subject  
To you, that ye may  
Glorify God for His guidance: <sup>2815</sup>  
And proclaim the Good News  
To all who do right.

38. Verily God will defend  
(From ill) those who believe:  
Verily, God loveth not  
Any that is a traitor  
To faith, or shows ingratitude.

#### SECTION 6.

39. ~~And~~ To those against whom <sup>2816</sup>  
War is made, permission  
Is given (to fight), because  
They are wronged;—and verily,  
God is Most Powerful  
For their aid;—
40. (They are) those who have  
Been expelled from their homes

سَخَّرْنَاهَا لَكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ○

٣٧- لَنْ يَنَالِ اللَّهُ لُحُومَهَا وَلَا دِمَآؤُهَا  
وَلَكِنْ يَنَالُهُ التَّقْوَىٰ مِنكُمْ  
كَذَٰلِكَ سَخَّرَهَا لَكُمْ  
لِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ مَا هَدَاكُمْ  
وَلِتُبَيِّرَ الْخَاسِرِينَ ○

٣٨- إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُدْفِعُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا  
إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ خَوَّانٍ كَفُورٍ ۖ

٣٩- أُذِنَ لِلَّذِينَ  
يُقَاتِلُونَ بِأَنَّهُمْ مُّظْلَمُونَ  
وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ نَصْرِهِمْ لَقَدِيرٌ ○

٤٠- الَّذِينَ أُخْرِجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ

2815. The essence of sacrifice has been explained in n. 2810. No one should suppose that meat or blood is acceptable to the One True God. It was a Pagan fancy that God could be appeased by blood sacrifice. But God does accept the offering of our hearts, and as a symbol of such offer, some visible institution is necessary. He has given us power over the brute creation, and permitted us to eat meat, but only if we pronounce His name at the solemn act of taking life, for without this solemn invocation, we are apt to forget the sacredness of life. By the invocation we are reminded that wanton cruelty is not in our thoughts, but only the need of food. Now if we further deny ourselves the greater part of the food (some theologians fix the proportion at three-quarters or two-thirds) for the sake of our poorer brethren in solemn assembly in the precincts of the Haram (sacred territory), our symbolic act finds practical expression in benevolence, and that is the virtue sought to be taught. We should be grateful to God for His guidance in this matter, in which many Peoples have gone wrong, and we should proclaim the true doctrine, so that virtue and charity may increase among men.

2816. Several translators have failed to notice that *yūqāṭalūna* (in the best-approved texts) is in the passive voice, "against whom war is made",—not "who take arms against the unbelievers" as Sale translates it. The clause "and verily...their aid" is parenthetical. Verse 40 connects on with "they are wronged". The wrong is indicated: 'driven by persecution from their home, for no other reason than that they worshipped the One True God.' This was the first occasion on which fighting—in self-defence—was permitted. This passage therefore undoubtedly dates from Medina.



In defiance of right,—  
 (For no cause) except  
 That they say, "Our Lord  
 Is God". Did not God  
 Check one set of people  
 By means of another,<sup>2617</sup>  
 There would surely have been  
 Pulled down monasteries,  
 churches,  
 Synagogues, and mosques, in  
 which  
 The name of God is  
 commemorated  
 In abundant measure. God will  
 Certainly aid those who  
 Aid His (cause);—for verily  
 God is Full of Strength,  
 Exalted in Might,<sup>2618</sup>  
 (Able to enforce His Will).

41. (They are) those who,  
 If We establish them  
 In the land, establish  
 Regular prayer and give  
 Regular charity, enjoin  
 The right and forbid wrong:<sup>2619</sup>  
 With God rests the end  
 (And decision) of (all) affairs.

42. If they treat thy (mission)  
 As false, so did the Peoples

بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ  
 إِلَّا أَنْ يَقُولُوا رَبُّنَا  
 اللَّهُ وَلَوْ لَا دَعَا اللَّهُ النَّاسَ  
 بَعْضُهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ  
 لَهْلَأَتْ مِنْ صَوَامِعِ  
 وَبِيَعٍ وَصَلَوَاتٍ وَمَسَاجِدٍ  
 يُذَكَّرُ فِيهَا اسْمُ اللَّهِ كَثِيرًا  
 وَلَيَنْصُرَنَّ اللَّهُ مَنْ يَنْصُرُهُ  
 إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَكَفِيُّ عَزَائِرٍ

٢١- الَّذِينَ إِنْ مَكَّنَّا لَهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ  
 أَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ  
 وَأَمَرُوا بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَنَهَوْا عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ  
 وَلِلَّهِ عَاقِبَةُ الْأُمُورِ

٢٢- وَإِنْ يَكْفُرْ بِكَ فَكُفِّ بِكَ

2617. Cf. ii. 251, where the expression is used in connection with David's fight against the Philistines. To allow a righteous people to fight against a ferocious and mischief-loving people was fully justified. But the justification was far greater here, when the little Muslim community was not only fighting for its own existence against the Meccan Quraish, but for the very existence of the Faith in the One True God. They had as much right to be in Mecca and worship in the Ka'ba as the other Quraish; yet they were exiled for their Faith. It affected not the faith of one peculiar people. The principle involved was that of all worship, Jewish or Christian as well as Muslim, and of all foundations built for pious uses.

2618. 'Azîz means Exalted in power, rank, dignity; Incomparable; Full of, might and majesty; Able to enforce His Will. The last signification is the one that predominates here.

2619. The justification of the righteous in resisting oppression when not only they but their Faith is persecuted and when they are led by a righteous Imam, is that it is a form of self-sacrifice. They are not fighting for themselves, for land, power, or privilege. They are fighting for the right.

Before them (with their  
Prophets),—<sup>2820</sup>  
The People of Noah,  
And 'Ad and Thamūd;

قَبْلَهُمْ قَوْمُ نُوحٍ  
وَآدَ وَثَمُودَ

43. Those of Abraham and Lūṭ;

٢٣- وَقَوْمُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَقَوْمُ لُوطَ

44. And the Companions <sup>2821</sup>  
Of the Madyan people;  
And Moses was rejected  
(In the same way). But I  
Granted respite to the  
Unbelievers,  
And (only) after that  
Did I punish them:  
But how (terrible) was  
My rejection (of them)! <sup>2822</sup>

٢٤- وَأَصْحَابُ مَدْيَنَ  
وَكَيْتَ مُوسَى  
فَأَمَلَيْتُ لِلْكَافِرِينَ  
ثُمَّ أَخَذْتُهُمْ  
فَكَيْفَ كَانَ تَكْرِيمِ

45. How many populations have We  
Destroyed, which were given  
To wrong-doing? They tumbled  
down <sup>2823</sup>  
On their roofs. And how many  
Wells are lying idle and  
neglected, <sup>2824</sup>  
And castles lofty and well-built?

٢٥- كَمَآءٍ مِّنْ قَرْيَةٍ أَهْلَكْنَاهَا  
وَهِيَ ظَالِمَةٌ فَمِنْ ذَٰلِكِ عَلَىٰ غُرُوبِهَا  
وَبُيُوتٌ مُّعْتَظِلَةٌ  
وَأَنْصَارٌ مَّشِيدَةٌ

46. Do they not travel  
Through the land, so that  
Their hearts (and minds) <sup>2825</sup>  
May thus learn wisdom

٢٦- أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ  
فَيَكُونُوا لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ يَعْقِلُونَ بِهَا

2820. It is nothing new if the Prophet of God is accused of imposture. This was done in all ages; e.g. Noah (vii. 64); Hūd the prophet of the 'Ad people (vii. 66); Ṣāliḥ the prophet of the Thamūd (vii. 76); Abraham (xxi. 55); Lūṭ (vii. 82); Shu'aib the prophet of the Madyan people (vii. 85) and also of the Companions of the Wood (xv. 78). The case of Moses is mentioned apart, as his people survived to the time of our Prophet and survive to the present, and they frequently rebelled against Moses (ii. 49-61).

2821. Were they the same as the Companions of the Wood? See n. 2000 to xv. 78.

2822. My Wrath on them, and the complete reversal of their fortune in consequence.

2823. The roofs fell in first, and the whole structure, walls and all, came tumbling after, as happens in ruins. The place was turned upside down.

2824. In a dry country like Arabia, a well stands as a symbol for a living, flourishing population, and many place-names mean "the well of so-and-so", e.g. Bir 'Alī, a village just south of Medina, the quality of whose drinking water is famous, or Abyār Ibn Ḥaṣṣān, a noted stopping place on the road from Mecca to Medina, about 92 miles from Medina.

2825. The word for "heart" in Arabic speech imports both the seat of intelligent faculties and understanding as well as the seat of affections and emotions. Those who reject God's Message may have their physical eyes and ears, but their hearts are blind and deaf. If their faculties of understanding were active, would they not see the Signs of God's Providence and God's Wrath in nature around them and in the cities and ruins if they travel intelligently?

And their ears may  
Thus learn to hear?  
Truly it is not their eyes  
That are blind, but their  
Hearts which are  
In their breasts.

47. Yet they ask thee  
To hasten on the Punishment!  
But God will not fail<sup>2826</sup>  
In His promise. Verily  
A Day in the sight of thy Lord  
Is like a thousand years  
Of your reckoning.

48. And to how many populations  
Did I give respite, which<sup>2827</sup>  
Were given to wrong-doing?  
In the end I punished them.  
To Me is the destination (of all).

أَوِ ادَّانَ يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا  
فَالْهَى لَا تَعْنَى الْإِبْصَارُ  
وَلَكِنْ تَعْنَى الْقُلُوبِ الَّتِي فِي الصُّدُورِ

٢٧- وَاسْتَعْجِلُوا نَكَ بِالْعَذَابِ  
وَلَكِنْ يُخْلِفُ اللَّهُ وَعْدَهُ  
وَإِنْ يَوْمًا عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ كَأَلْفِ سَنَةٍ مِمَّا  
تَعُدُّونَ ○

٢٨- وَكَأَيِّنْ قَرْيَةٍ أَفْلَحْتُ لَهَا  
وَهِيَ ظَالِمَةٌ ثُمَّ أَخَذْتُهَا  
وَالَّتِي الْمَصِيرُ ○

C. 153.—The power of Evil is in insidious suggestions:  
(xxii. 49-78.) They are only a trial to those whose hearts  
Are inclined to evil, but Truth doth shine  
The nobler for the Believers, by the grace  
And guidance of God. Martyrs who give  
Their all in the cause of God will find  
A provision ample and eternal. The finest  
And subtlest mysteries are but proofs of the goodness  
Of God. Dispute not about rites and ceremonies:  
Follow the Straight Way. Seek for worship  
The Only True God, and strive in His service,  
That ye may be witnesses among men  
To God's Truth, as the Apostle is a witness to you.

### SECTION 7.

49. Say: "O men! I am  
(Sent) to you only to give

٢٩- قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّمَا أَنَا لَكُمْ

2826. If God gives respite, those to whom it is given have a real chance of repentance and amendment. He will not curtail His promise of respite. But on the other hand He has promised to call everyone to account for his deeds, and this involves justice and punishment for sin. This promise will also come true. It is foolish to try to hasten it. Time with Him is nothing. We keep count of time for our relative calculations. His existence is absolute, and not conditioned by Time or Place. What we call a thousand years may be nothing more than a day or a minute to Him.

2827. The argument begun in xxii. 45 is now rounded off and closed.

A clear warning: <sup>2828</sup>

50. "Those who believe and work  
Righteousness, for them  
Is forgiveness and a sustenance  
Most generous." <sup>2829</sup>

51. "But those who strive  
Against Our Signs, to frustrate <sup>2830</sup>  
Them,—they will be  
Companions of the Fire."

52. ~~Never~~ did We send  
An apostle or a prophet  
Before thee, but, when he  
Framed a desire, Satan  
Threw some (vanity) <sup>2831</sup>  
Into his desire: but God  
Will cancel anything (vain)  
That Satan throws in,  
And God will confirm  
(And establish) His Signs:  
For God is full of knowledge  
And wisdom: <sup>2832</sup>

53. That He may make  
The suggestions thrown in  
By Satan, but a trial <sup>2833</sup>  
For those in whose hearts

نَذِيرٌ مُبِينٌ ۝

۝-۵۰- قَالِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ  
لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَأَزْوَاجٌ كَرِيمٌ ۝

۝-۵۱- وَالَّذِينَ سَعَوْا فِي آيَاتِنَا مُعْجِرِينَ  
أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ ۝

۝-۵۲- وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رُسُلٍ  
وَلَا نَبِيٍّ إِلَّا إِذَا تَمَنَّى  
أَلْقَى الشَّيْطَانُ فِي أُمْنِيَّتِهِ ۝  
فَيَنْسُوهُ اللَّهُ مَا يَلْقَى الشَّيْطَانُ  
تَعْمُرُ لَهُمُ اللَّهُ آيَاتِهِ  
وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ۝

۝-۵۳- لِيَجْعَلَ مَا يُلْقِي  
الشَّيْطَانُ فِتْنَةً لِلَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ

2828. It is the Apostle's duty to convey the warning in the clearest terms to the wicked. It is no part of his duty to coerce them or judge them, or bring on the Punishment for them. That only rests with God. But the warning itself is full of Mercy: for it gives the highest hope to the repentant sinner who turns and comes to God.

2829. The "sustenance" must be construed in the widest sense, spiritual as well as intellectual and physical. The reward of righteousness is far more generous than any merit there may be in the creature following the Will of his Creator.

2830. It will not be in their power to frustrate God's Plan; all they will do is to go further and further down in their spiritual state, deeper and deeper in their Hell.

2831. Prophets and apostles (the distinction is explained in n. 2503 to xix. 51) are but human. Their actions are righteous and their motives pure. But in judging things from a human point of view, the suggestion may come to their mind (from Satan) that it would be good to have power or wealth or influence for furthering God's cause, or that it may be good to conciliate some faction which may be irreconcilable. In fact, in God's Plan, it may be the opposite. God, in His mercy and inspiration, will cancel any false or vain suggestions of this kind, and confirm and strengthen His own Commands and make known His Will in His Signs or revelations.

2832. This clause and the similar clause at the end of the next verse are parenthetical.

2833. If any suggestion comes to the human mind that is not in accordance with God's Will and Plan, it has two opposite effects: to evil minds it is a trial and temptation from the Evil One, but to the mind well-instructed in Faith, it stands self-condemned at once, and becomes a means of strengthening the Faith and stimulating redoubled efforts to conform to the Will of God.

Is a disease and who are <sup>2834</sup>  
 Hardened of heart: verily  
 The wrong-doers are in a schism  
 Far (from the Truth):

فَرَضَ وَالْقَاسِيَةِ قُلُوبُهُمْ  
 وَإِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ لَفِي شِقَاقٍ بَعِيدٍ ۝

54. And that those on whom <sup>2835</sup>  
 Knowledge has been bestowed  
 may learn  
 That the (Qur-an) is the Truth  
 From thy Lord, and that they  
 May believe therein, and their hearts  
 May be made humbly (open)  
 To it: for verily God is  
 The Guide of those who believe,  
 To the Straight Way.

۝ وَلِيَعْلَمَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ  
 أَكْثَرَ الْحَقِّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ  
 فَيُؤْمِنُوا بِهِ فَتُخَفَّفَ عَنْهُ قُلُوبُهُمْ  
 وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَهَادٍ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا  
 إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ۝

55. Those who reject Faith  
 Will not cease to be <sup>2836</sup>  
 In doubt concerning (Revelation)  
 Until the Hour (of Judgment)  
 Comes suddenly upon them,  
 Or there comes to them  
 The Penalty of a Day of Disaster.

۝ وَلَا يَزَالُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فِي فِرَّةٍ فَتنَةٍ  
 حَتَّى تَأْتِيَهُمُ السَّاعَةُ بَغْتَةً  
 أَوْ يَأْتِيَهُمْ عَذَابٌ يَوْمَ عَقِيمٍ ۝

56. On that Day the Dominion <sup>2837</sup>  
 Will be that of God:  
 He will judge between them:  
 So those who believe  
 And work righteous deeds will be  
 In Gardens of Delight.

۝ ۝ أَلَمْ تَكُنْ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِأُولَئِكَ بِتَعْلَمٍ بَيْنَهُمْ  
 وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فِي  
 جَنَّاتٍ التَّحِيْمِ ۝

57. And for those who reject Faith  
 And deny Our Signs,  
 There will be a humiliating  
 Punishment.

۝ ۝ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا  
 فَأُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُهِينٌ ۝

2834. Cf. ii. 10. I understand the "disease in the heart" to be an earlier state of curse, which leads in an intensified form to a complete "hardening of the heart".

2835. The last clause in the last verse was parenthetical. Treat this clause as parallel with the first clause in verse 53, "that he may make", etc. Both will then connect with "God will confirm (and establish) His Signs" in verse 52. See n. 2833 above.

2836. The penalty of deliberately rejecting Faith is that the person doing so closes the channels of Mercy that flow from God. He will always be subject to doubts and superstitions, until the time comes when all earthly scales fall from his spiritual eyes. But then there will be no time for Repentance: it will be too late to profit by the guidance of God given through Revelation.

2837. Such power as Evil has over those who yield to it (xvii. 62-64) will then be gone, as the respite granted to Satan will be over, and God's Kingdom will be established.

## SECTION 8.

58. Those who leave their homes  
In the cause of God,  
And are then slain or die,—  
On them will God bestow verily  
A goodly Provision: <sup>2838</sup>  
Truly God is He Who  
Bestows the best Provision.

59. Verily He will admit them  
To a place with which  
They shall be well pleased :  
For God is All-Knowing,  
Most Forbearing. <sup>2839</sup>

60. That (is so). And if one  
Has retaliated to no greater  
Extent than the injury he received,  
And is again set upon  
Inordinately, God will help  
Him: for God is One  
That blots out (sins)  
And forgives (again and again). <sup>2840</sup>

61. That is because God merges  
Night into Day, and He  
Merges Day into Night, and  
Verily it is God Who hears

٥٨- وَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ  
ثُمَّ قُتِلُوا أَوْ مَاتُوا  
لَيَرْزُقَنَّهُمُ اللَّهُ رِزْقًا حَسَنًا  
وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَكَلِيمٌ عَلِيمٌ

٥٩- لَيَدْخُلُنَّهُمْ مِنْ دَخَلٍ لَا يَرْضَوْنَ  
وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَعَلِيمٌ حَلِيمٌ

٦٠- ذَلِكَ وَمَنْ عَاقَبَ  
بِإِثْمٍ مَا عُوِقَبَ بِهِ  
ثُمَّ بَغَى عَلَيْهِ لَيَنْصُرْهُ اللَّهُ  
إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَعَفُوٌّ غَفُورٌ

٦١- ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ يُوَلِّجُ اللَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ  
وَيُوَلِّجُ النَّهَارَ فِي اللَّيْلِ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ

2838. *Rizq*: sustenance, provision. I have preferred the latter word here, because after death we can only think of *rizq* in a large metaphorical sense, i.e. all the provision necessary to equip the person for a full and happy Future Life, and also, I think, a provision for his dependants and near and dear ones in this life.

2839. Martyrdom is the sacrifice of life in the service of God. Its reward is therefore even greater than that of an ordinarily good life. The martyr's sins are forgiven by the very act of martyrdom, which implies service and self-surrender in the highest sense of the word. God knows all his past life but will forbear from calling him to account for things that should strictly come into his account.

2840. Ordinarily Muslims are enjoined to bear injuries with patience and return good for evil (xxiii. 96). But there are occasions when human feelings get the better of our wise resolutions, or when, in a state of conflict or war, we return "as good as we get". In that case our retaliation is permissible, provided the injury we inflict is not greater than that we receive. After such retaliation we are even, but if the other side again acts aggressively and goes beyond all bounds in attacking us, we are entitled to protection from God in spite of all our faults: for God is One that blots out our sins, and forgives again and again.

And sees (all things).<sup>2841</sup>

62. That is because God—He<sup>2842</sup>  
Is the Reality; and those  
Besides Him whom they invoke,—  
They are but vain Falsehood:  
Verily God is He, Most High,  
Most Great.<sup>2843</sup>

63. Seest thou not that God  
Sends down rain from the sky,  
And forthwith the earth  
Becomes clothed with green?  
For God is He Who understands<sup>2844</sup>  
The finest mysteries, and  
Is well-acquainted (with them).

64. To Him belongs all that is  
In the heavens and on earth:  
For verily God,—He is  
Free of all wants,  
Worthy of all praise.<sup>2845</sup>

بَصِيرٌ ۝

ۖ۲- ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ  
وَأَنَّ مَا يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ هُوَ الْبَاطِلُ  
وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْكَبِيرُ ۝

ۖ۳- أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً  
فَنُصِّبَ بِهِ الْأَرْضَ مُخْضَرَّةً ۖ  
إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَطِيفٌ خَبِيرٌ ۝

ۖ۴- لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ  
وَلِلَّهِ اللَّهُ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ ۝

2841. To some it may appear strange or even irreconcilable that God should be both Merciful and Just; that He should both protect His devotees and yet ask for their self-sacrifice; that He should command them to return good for evil, and yet permit retaliation under certain restrictions. But such thoughts are short-sighted. Do they not see many inconsistencies in all Life, all Nature, and all Creation? Why, even in such simple phenomena as Night and Day, the one merges into the other, and no one can tell when precisely the one begins and the other ends. Yet we can see in a rough sort of way that the one gives rest and the other activity, that the one reveals the beauties of the starry heavens and the other the splendour of the sun. In countless ways we can see there the wisdom and the fine artistry of God. And there are subtle nuances and mergings in nature that our intelligence can hardly penetrate. Now human life and human relations are far more complicated, and it is God alone Who can see all the subtle distinctions and hear the cries of *all* His creatures, in a world which Tennyson described as "red in tooth and claw".

2842. The emphatic construction calls attention to the fact that God is the only abiding Reality. All else is like shadows that will pass away.

2843. See n. 2841 above. Our vain imaginings, groundless doubts, foolish subtleties, and false worship should all give place to trust and faith in the one and only Reality.

2844. *Latîf*, as a name of God, is as difficult to define in words as the idea it seeks to represent is difficult to grasp in our minds. It implies: (1) fine, subtle (the basic meaning); (2) so fine and subtle as to be imperceptible to human sight; (3) so pure as to be incomprehensible; (4) with sight so perfect as to see and understand the finest subtleties and mysteries; (5) so kind and gracious as to bestow gifts of the most refined kind; extraordinarily gracious and understanding. No. 4 is the predominant meaning here; Nos. 2 and 3 in vi. 103; and No. 5 in xii. 100 and xlii. 19; but every shade of meaning must be borne in mind in each case, as a subsidiary factor in the spiritual melody.

2845. Each of the verses xxii. 61-63 mentioned two attributes of God with reference to the contents of that verse. This verse now sums up the whole argument, and the two attributes with which it closes sum up the idea by which we can understand God's goodness. God's loving kindness and mercies are not like those of human creatures who all depend upon one another, and often expect some kindness or recognition in return. God is above all wants and depends in no way whatever on His creatures. His mercies have therefore a special quality, which we cannot describe except by gratefully singing the praises of God. Cf. ii. 267.

## SECTION 9.

65. Seest thou not that God  
Has made subject to you (men)  
All that is on the earth,  
And the ships that sail<sup>2846</sup>  
Through the sea by His command?  
He withholds the sky (rain)<sup>2847</sup>  
From falling on the earth  
Except by His leave:  
For God is Most Kind  
And Most Merciful to man.

66. It is He Who gave you life,  
Will cause you to die,  
And will again give you  
Life: truly man is  
A most ungrateful creature!

67. To every People have We  
Appointed rites and ceremonies<sup>2848</sup>  
Which they must follow:  
Let them not then dispute  
With thee on the matter,  
But do thou invite (them)  
To thy Lord: for thou art  
Assuredly on the Right Way.

68. If they do wrangle with thee,  
Say, "God knows best  
What it is ye are doing."<sup>2849</sup>

٦٥- أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ سَخَّرَ لَكُم  
ثَمَانِي الْأَرْضِ وَالْفُلَ تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ  
بِأَمْرِهِ وَيُمْسِكُ السَّمَاءَ أَنْ تَقَعَ عَلَى  
الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ  
إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَءَوَدُّكَ رَحِيمٌ ۝

٦٦- وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَحْيَاكُمْ ثُمَّ يُمِيتُكُمْ  
ثُمَّ يُحْيِيكُمْ  
إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَكَفُورٌ ۝

٦٧- لِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ جَعَلْنَا مَنَسَكًا  
هُم نَاسِكُوهُ فَلَا يُبَاذِرُكَ فِي الْأَمْرِ  
وَأَدْعُ إِلَى رَبِّكَ  
إِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ هُدًى مُسْتَقِيمٍ ۝

٦٨- وَإِنْ جَدَلُواكَ  
فَقُلِ اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ۝

2846. Land and sea have been made subject to man: by God's command, so that man can develop his life freely on earth.

2847. *Samā'a* means (1) something high, (2) a roof, a ceiling, (3) the sky, the canopy of heaven, (4) cloud or rain. I understand the last meaning here, though most authorities seem to render it by some such word as "sky". If we understand rain here, we have a complete picture of the three elements in which man lives—land, air and sea. Rain is also appropriate for mention with God's kindness and mercy. He regulates the rain for man's benefit.

2848. Rites and ceremonies may appear to be an unimportant matter compared with "weightier matters of the Law" and with the higher needs of man's spiritual nature. But they are necessary for social and religious organisation, and their effect on the individual himself is not to be despised. In any case, as they are visible external symbols, they give rise to the most heated controversies. Such controversies are to be deprecated. That does not mean that our rites and ceremonies are to be made light of. Those in Islam rest on the highest social and religious needs of man, and if we are convinced that we are on the Right Way, we should invite all to join us, without entering into controversies about such matters.

2849. 'You are only wrangling about matters about which you have no knowledge nor any deep religious feeling. The springs of your conduct are all open before God, and He will judge you.'



69. "God will judge between you  
On the Day of Judgment  
Concerning the matters in which  
Ye differ."<sup>2850</sup>

70. Knowest thou not that  
God knows all that is  
In heaven and on earth?  
Indeed it is all  
In a record, and that  
Is easy for God.<sup>2851</sup>

71. Yet they worship, besides God,  
Things for which no authority  
Has been sent down to them,  
And of which they have  
(Really) no knowledge:  
For those that do wrong  
There is no helper.<sup>2852</sup>

72. When Our Clear Signs  
Are rehearsed to them,  
Thou wilt notice a denial<sup>2853</sup>  
On the faces of the Unbelievers!  
They nearly attack with violence  
Those who rehearse Our Signs  
To them. Say, "Shall I  
Tell you of something  
(Far) worse than these Signs?"<sup>2854</sup>  
It is the Fire (of Hell)!

٦٩- اللَّهُ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ  
فِيمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ ○

٧٠- أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَاءِ  
وَالْأَرْضِ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ فِي كِتَابٍ  
إِنَّ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ ○

٧١- وَيَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ  
مَا لَهُمْ بِهِ سُلْطَانٌ  
وَمَا لَيْسَ لَهُمْ بِهِ عِلْمٌ  
وَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِنْ تَصْدِيرٍ ○

٧٢- وَإِذَا تُتْلَى عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُنَا بَيِّنَاتٍ  
تَعْرِفُ فِي وُجُوهِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الْمُنْكَرَ  
يَكَادُونَ يَسْطُونَ بِالَّذِينَ  
يَتْلُونَ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُنَا  
قُلْ أَفَأَنْتُمْ كُمُّونَ ذَلِكَ الْنَّارُ

2850. 'You not only find fault with the very few and simple rites and ceremonies in Islam: you, outside Islam, have no rites and ceremonies which you are yourselves agreed upon, either as Christians or as Jews, or one compared with the other.'

2851. We human beings can only think of knowledge being accurately and permanently preserved by means of a record. God's knowledge has all the qualities of a perfect record, and it is moreover complete and comprehensive. This is not difficult for Him from Whom flow all knowledge and intelligence.

2852. When plain common-sense shows the absurdity of false worship, behind which there is neither knowledge, intelligence, nor authority (quite the contrary), who or what can help the false misguided creatures who dishonour God by false worship?

2853. *Munkar*: (1) a refusal to accept something offered; (2) a denial of something stated or pointed out; (3) a feeling of disapproval or active aversion, or disgust.

2854. There is irony here. 'You think God's revelations and Signs are distasteful to you! There will be something far more distasteful to you if you do not repent! What do you say to the inevitable Punishment?'

God has promised it  
To the Unbelievers!  
And evil is that destination ! "

وَعَدَهَا اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا  
وَبَشِّرِ الْمَصِيدُ ۝

### SECTION 10.

73. ⑦ men ! Here is  
A parable set forth !  
Listen to it ! Those  
On whom, besides God,  
Ye call, cannot create  
(Even) a fly, if they all  
Met together for the purpose !  
And if the fly should snatch  
Away anything from them,  
They would not (even) try  
To release it from the fly.  
Feeble are those who petition <sup>2855</sup>  
And those whom they petition !

٤٣- يَأْتِيهَا النَّاسُ ضَرْبَ مَثَلٍ  
فَأَسْكِنُوا لَهُ إِنْ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ  
دُونِ اللَّهِ  
لَنْ يَخْلُقُوا ذُبَابًا وَلَوْ اجْتَمَعُوا لَهُ  
وَلَنْ يُسْلِبَهُمُ الْدَابَّابُ شَيْئًا  
لَا يَسْتَنْقِذُوهُ مِنْهُ  
ضَعُفَ الظَّالِمُ وَالْمُظْلُومُ ۝

74. No just estimate have they  
Made of God : for God  
Is He Who is strong  
And able to carry out  
His Will. <sup>2856</sup>

٤٤- مَا قَدَرُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ  
إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَقَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ ۝

75. God chooses Messengers <sup>2857</sup>  
From angels and from men :  
For God is He Who hears  
And sees (all things). <sup>2858</sup>

٤٥- اللَّهُ يَصْطَفِي مِنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ رُسُلًا  
وَمِنَ النَّاسِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ بَصِيرٌ ۝

76. He knows what is before them  
And what is behind them :

٤٦- يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ ۝

2855. Both idols and their worshippers are poor, foolish, feeble creatures !

2856. No one can have a true idea of God, who descends to the base forms of false worship. God has all power, and He is fully able to carry out every part of His Will and Plan. He is exalted above all in power and dignity. Cf. xxii. 41 and n. 2818 for the full meaning of 'Asîr.

2857. Men are chosen as Messengers to ordinary men ; for ordinary men will not be able to understand and be in communion with beings so refined as angels. But angels are sent as Messengers to God's chosen apostles, to convey the Message from time to time. In either case they are chosen by God, are subject to God's Will, and should not be worshipped as gods.

2858. As God regards the humblest of His creatures and hears their prayer, He sends men apostles out of their own brethren (see last note), and to such apostles He communicates the highest spiritual Truths through His angels.

And to God go back  
All questions (for decision).<sup>2859</sup>

77. ﴿٢٥﴾ ye who believe!  
Bow down, prostrate yourselves,  
And adore your Lord;  
And do good;  
That ye may prosper.<sup>2860</sup>

78. And strive in His cause  
As ye ought to strive,  
(With sincerity and under  
discipline).<sup>2861</sup>

He has chosen you, and has  
Imposed no difficulties on you<sup>2862</sup>  
In religion; it is the cult  
Of your father Abraham.  
It is He Who has named  
You Muslims, both before<sup>2863</sup>  
And in this (Revelation);  
That the Apostle may be  
A witness for you, and ye  
Be witnesses for mankind!<sup>2864</sup>  
So establish regular Prayer,  
Give regular Charity,  
And hold fast to God!  
He is your Protector—

- 17 The Best to protect  
30 And the Best to help!

وَالِلّٰهِ تُرْجَعُ الْأُمُورُ ۝

۞-۷۷- اَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا ارْكَعُوا وَاسْجُدُوا  
وَاعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمْ وَافْعَلُوا الْخَيْرَ  
لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ۝

۷۸- وَجَاهِدْ فِيْ اِلٰهِكَ حَتّٰى يَهَادِبَ  
هُوَ اَجْبَدُكُمْ وَمَا جَعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيْ  
الْدِيْنِ مِنْ حَرَجٍ  
مِّلَّةَ اٰبِيْكُمْ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ  
هُوَ سَمَّٰكُمْ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ ۚ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَ  
فِيْ هٰذَا لِيَكُوْنَ الرَّسُوْلُ شَهِيدًا عَلَيْكُمْ  
وَتَكُوْنُوْا شَهِدًا اَعْلٰى النَّاسِ ۚ  
فَاَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ  
وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِاِلٰهِ هُوَ مَوْلَاكُمْ  
فَنِعْمَ الْمَوْلٰى وَنِعْمَ النَّصِيْرُ ۝

2859. Time, before or behind, may be of some importance to men. They may dispute as to what was the first Message, and what is the last Message. To God, this question of priority and posteriority is of no consequence. All questions go back ultimately to Him and are judged on their merits.

2860. *Prosper* : in a spiritual sense, both in this life and the Hereafter.

2861. As far as the striving is concerned with Jihād in the narrow sense, see the limitations in n. 204 to ii. 190 and n. 205 to ii. 191. But the words are perfectly general and apply to all true and unselfish striving for spiritual good.

2862. The Jews were hampered by many restrictions, and their religion was racial. Christianity, as originally preached, was a hermit religion : "sell whatsoever thou hast" (Mark x. 21); "take no thought for the morrow" (Matt. vi. 34). Islam, as originally preached, gives freedom and full play to man's faculties of every kind. It is universal, and claims to date from Adam : father Abraham is mentioned as the great Ancestor of those among whom Islam was first preached (Jews, Christians, and Arab Quraish).

2863. *Before* : see Abraham's prayer in ii. 128. *In this Revelation* : in this very verse, as well as in other places.

2864. See ii. 143, and notes 143 and 144. As the Prophet is a guide and exemplar among us, so Muslims ought to be exemplars amongst mankind. The best witnesses to God's Truth are those who show its light in their lives.

INTRODUCTION TO SŪRA XXIII (*Mū-minūn*).

This Sūra deals with the virtues which are the seed-bed of Faith, especially in an environment in which Truth is denied and its votaries insulted and persecuted. But Truth is One and must prevail. Those who do wrong will be filled with vain regrets when it is too late for repentance.

It belongs to the late Meccan period.

*Summary.*

Faith, coupled with humility in prayer, charity, abstinence from vanity and from indulgence in appetites, and strict probity, must lead to final success, even though people mock and accuse the righteous of false motives, as did the contemporaries of Noah, of Moses, and of Jesus (xxiii. 1-50, and C. 154).

The apostles of God and the righteous form one Brotherhood, but those who make schisms and refuse to believe have ample evidence pointing to Truth and the goodness and greatness of God (xxiii. 51-92, and C. 155).

Evil must be repelled by goodness and faith in God; for the future life is sure, and those who disbelieve will wish for another chance when it is too late (xxiii. 93-118, and C. 156).

C. 154.—Faith leads to humility, avoidance  
 (xxiii. 1-50.) Of vanity in word and deed, charity,  
 Continence, faithful observance  
 Of trusts and covenants, and devout  
 Approach to God,—surest steps  
 To Bliss. Man carries in himself  
 Proofs of God's Providence; the same  
 Story is told if he looks at nature  
 Around him; and the long line of Teachers  
 Sent by God shows God's special care  
 Of humanity. What though they were  
 Rejected and scorned, maligned and persecuted?  
 God's Truth won through, as it always will.

## Sura XXIII.

*Mu-minun*, or The Believers.*In the name of God, Most Gracious,  
Most Merciful.*

1. The Believers must  
(Eventually) win through,—<sup>2865</sup>
2. Those who humble themselves <sup>2866</sup>  
In their prayers;
3. Who avoid vain talk;
4. Who are active in deeds  
Of charity;
5. Who abstain from sex,<sup>2867</sup>
6. Except with those joined  
To them in the marriage bond,  
Or (the captives) whom  
Their right hands possess,—<sup>2868</sup>  
For (in their case) they are  
Free from blame,
7. But those whose desires exceed  
Those limits are transgressors ;—



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

۱- قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ۝

۲- الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ ۝

۳- وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنِ اللَّغْوِ مُعْرِضُونَ ۝

۴- وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِلزَّكَاةِ فَاعِلُونَ ۝

۵- وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِفُرُوجِهِمْ حَافِظُونَ ۝

۶- إِلَّا عَلَىٰ أَزْوَاجِهِمْ  
أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ غَيْرُ  
مَلُومِينَ ۝

۷- فَمَنْ ابْتَغَىٰ وَرَاءَ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْعَادُونَ ۝

2865. *Aflaha*: win through, prosper, succeed, achieve their aims or obtain salvation from sorrow and all evil. This verse connects on with verses 10 and 11 below. The success or victory may come in this world, but is certain and lasting in the world to come.

2866. Humility in prayer as regards (1) their estimate of their own worth in God's presence, (2) as regards their estimate of their own powers or strength unless they are helped by God, and (3) as regards the petitions they offer to God.

2867. The Muslim must guard himself against every kind of sex abuse or sex perversion. The new psychology associated with the name of Freud traces many of our hidden motives to sex, and it is common knowledge that our refinement or degradation may be measured by the hidden workings of our sex instincts. But even the natural and lawful exercise of sex is restricted to the marriage bond, under which the rights of both parties are duly regulated and maintained.

2868. This is further explained and amplified in iv. 25. It will be seen there that the status of a captive when raised to freedom by marriage is the same as that of a free woman as regards her rights, but more lenient as regards the punishment to be inflicted if she falls from virtue.

8. Those who faithfully observe  
Their trusts and their covenants; <sup>2869</sup> وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِآمْنَتِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رَحُونَ
9. And who (strictly) guard <sup>2870</sup>  
Their prayers; — وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلَى صَلَاتِهِمْ حَافِظُونَ
10. These will be the heirs, <sup>2871</sup> ۱۰- أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْوَرَثُونَ
11. Who will inherit Paradise:  
They will dwell therein  
(For ever). ۱۱- الَّذِينَ يَرْتُونَ الْفِرْدَوْسَ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ
12. **Q**uan We did create  
From a quintessence (of clay); <sup>2872</sup> ۱۲- وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ سُلَالَةٍ مِنْ طِينٍ
13. Then We placed him  
As (a drop of) sperm ۱۳- ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَاهُ نُطْفَةً

2869. Trusts may be express or implied. Express trusts are those where property is entrusted or duties are assigned by some one to some other whom he trusts, to carry out either immediately or in specified contingencies, such as death. Implied trusts arise out of power, or position, or opportunity; e. g., a king holds his kingdom on trust from God for his subjects: the Afghan official phrase for their kingdom used to be *Dawlat-i-Khudā-dād* ('God-given kingdom'). The subject of covenants, express and implied, has been discussed in n. 682 to v. 1. Covenants create obligations, and express and implied trusts and covenants taken together cover the whole field of obligations.

2870. In verse 2 we were directed to the spirit of humility and earnestness in our prayers. Here we are told how necessary the habit of regular prayer is to our spiritual well-being and development, as it brings us closer to God, and thus sums up the light of the seven jewels of our Faith, viz.: (1) humility, (2) avoidance of vanity, (3) charity, (4) sex purity, (5) fidelity to trusts, and (6) to covenants, and (7) an earnest desire to get closer to God.

2871. Cf. xxi. 105, where it is said that the righteous will inherit the earth. In the first verse of this Sūra, the final success or victory is referred to. Truth will prevail even on this earth, but it may not be for any individual men of righteousness to see it: it may be in the time of their heirs and successors. But in the life to come, there is no doubt that every man will see the fruit of his life here and the righteous will *inherit* heaven, in the sense that they will attain it after their death here.

2872. In this beautiful passage, God's creative work, as far as man is concerned, is recapitulated, in order to show man's real position in this life, and the certainty of the future: to which he was referred for his reward in verses 10-11 above. For the various stages of creation, see n. 120 to ii. 117. Here we are not concerned with the earliest stage, the creation of primeval matter out of nothing. It is also a process of creation when inorganic matter becomes living matter. Thus inorganic constituents of the earth are absorbed into living matter by way of food and living matter reproduces itself by means of sperm. This is deposited in the ovum and fertilises it and rests for a time in security in the mother's womb. The first change in the fertilised ovum is the conversion into a sort of clot of thickly congealed blood; the zygote cells grow by segmentation; then the mass gradually assumes shape in its growth as a fetus. From the lump develop bones and flesh and organs and a nervous system. So far man's growth is like that of an animal, but a further process takes place which makes the infant animal into the infant man. This is the breathing of God's spirit into him (xv. 29): that process need not be precisely at a given point of time. It may be a continuous process parallel to that of physical growth. The child is born; it grows; it decays and dies; but after death another chapter opens for the individual, and it is to remind us of this most momentous chapter that the previous stages are recapitulated.

In a place of rest,<sup>2873</sup>  
Firmly fixed;

14. Then We made the sperm  
Into a clot of congealed blood ;  
Then of that clot We made  
A (foetus) lump ; then We  
Made out of that lump  
Bones and clothed the bones  
With flesh ; then We developed  
Out of it another creature.<sup>2874</sup>  
So blessed be God,  
The Best to create !

15. After that, at length  
Ye will die.<sup>2875</sup>

16. Again, on the Day  
Of Judgment, will ye be  
Raised up.

17. And We have made, above you,  
Seven tracts;<sup>2876</sup> and We  
Are never unmindful  
Of (Our) Creation.<sup>2877</sup>

فِي قَرَارٍ مَّكِينٍ ۝

۱۴- ثُمَّ خَلَقْنَا الطُّفْلَةَ عَلَقَةً  
فَخَلَقْنَا الْعَلَقَةَ مُضْغَةً فَخَلَقْنَا الطُّفْلَةَ  
عِظَامًا فَكَسْنَا الْعِظَامَ لَحْمًا  
ثُمَّ أَنشَأْنَاهُ خَلْقًا آخَرَ  
فَتَذَكَّرَ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنَ الْخَالِقِينَ ۝

۱۵- ثُمَّ إِنَّكُمْ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ لَنَيُّتُونَ ۝

۱۶- ثُمَّ إِنَّكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ تُبْعَثُونَ ۝

۱۷- وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا فَوْقَكُمْ سَبْعَ طَرَائِقَ  
وَمَا كُنَّا عَنِ الْخَالِقِ غَافِلِينَ ۝

2873. The growth in the foetal stage is silent and unseen. The foetus is protected in the mother's womb like a king in a castle; it is firmly fixed, and gets the protection of the mother's body, on which it depends for its own growth until birth.

2874. From a mere animal, we now consider man as man. Is it not a Sign of wonder in itself that from dry dust (*ṭurāb*, xxii. 5) or inorganic matter should be made protoplasm (moist clay or organic matter); from it should grow a new animal life; and out of it should grow human life, with all its capacities and responsibilities? Man carries within himself Signs of God's wisdom and power, and he can see them every day in the universe around him.

2875. Our physical death in this mortal life seems to make a break. But if it were the end of all, our life becomes meaningless. Our own instinct tells us that it cannot be so, and God assures us that there will be a resurrection for judgment.

2876. *Ṭarāiq* : tracts, roads, orbits, or paths of motion in the visible heavens. These seven are regular and clearly marked to our eyes, in the immense space that we see around us. We must go to astronomy to form any plausible theories of these motions. But their simplest observation gives us a sublime view of beauty, order, and grandeur in the universe. The assurance given in the next clause, that God cares for us and all His Creation, calls our attention to God's goodness, which is further illustrated in the subsequent verses.

2877. God's care for His Creation is ceaseless. A few examples of His care for our physical well-being are given in verses 18—22, and for our spiritual well-being, in Sections 2 to 5.

18. And We send down water  
From the sky according to <sup>2878</sup>  
(Due) measure, and We cause it  
To soak in the soil;  
And We certainly are able  
To drain it off (with ease).

١٨- وَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً بِقَدَرٍ  
فَأَنْسَكْنَاهُ فِي الْأَرْضِ  
وَرَأَا عَلَى ذَهَابٍ بِهِ لَقَدْ رُؤُونٌ

19. With it We grow for you  
Gardens of date-palms  
And vines: in them have ye  
Abundant fruits: and of them  
Ye eat (and have enjoyment),— <sup>2879</sup>

١٩- فَأَنْشَأْنَا لَكُمْ بِهِ جَنَّاتٍ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا  
وَأَعْنَابٌ لَكُمْ فِيهَا فَوَاكِهُ كَثِيرَةٌ  
وَمِنْهَا تَأْكُلُونَ

20. Also a tree springing  
Out of Mount Sinai, <sup>2880</sup>  
Which produces oil,  
And a relish for those  
Who use it for food.

٢٠- وَشَجَرَةً تَخْرُجُ مِنْ طُورِ سَيْنَاءَ  
تَنْبُتُ بِالذِّهْنِ وَصَبْرٍ لِلْكَافِرِينَ

21. And in cattle (too) ye  
Have an instructive example: <sup>2881</sup>  
From within their bodies  
We produce (milk) for you

٢١- وَإِنَّ لَكُمْ فِي الْأَنْعَامِ لَعِبْرَةً  
نُسْقِيكُمْ مِمَّا فِي بُطُونِهَا

2878. Normally the rain comes well distributed; it soaks into the soil; the moisture is retained for a long time in all high grounds; it soaks and penetrates through many layers of soil and forms the architecture of physical geography; the retentive powers of higher soil enable rivers to flow perennially even where, as in India, the rainfall is seasonal and confined to a few months in the year. Another form in which water comes down from the sky according to due measure is in snow and hail: these also have their place in the economy of air and soil. Were it not for snow and glaciers in the higher mountain regions, some of the rivers would fail in their abundant flow. As wonderful as the supply of water and moisture is its drainage. It returns to the sea and air in all sorts of ways, and the formation of mist and clouds repeats the cycle. Were it not for the drainage and the clearance of the waters, we should have floods and waterlogging, as happens when the normal processes of nature are temporarily obstructed. The same thing happens when the rain comes down in other than due measure. These abnormal conditions also have their value. But how grateful should man be for God's gifts in the ceaseless processes of nature on such an enormous scale!

2879. Cf. vii. 19 and n. 776 to v. 69.

2880. For Arabia the best olives grow round about Mount Sinai. The fig, the olive, Mount Sinai, and the sacred city of Mecca are mentioned together in association in xcv. 1-3, where we shall consider the mystic meaning. Olive oil is an ingredient in medicinal ointments and in ointments used for religious ceremonies such as the consecration of kings. It has thus a symbolic meaning. If used for food, the olive has a delicious flavour. Cf. also xxiv. 35, where the olive is called a Blessed Tree, and n. 3000.

2881. 'Ibrat: the root meaning of the verb is "to interpret, or expound, or instruct", as in xii. 43; the noun means, an interpretation, or example or Sign that instructs, as here and in xvi. 66, or gives warning, as in iii. 13. From cattle we get milk and meat; also from their skins we make leather for shoes, boots, straps, saddlery, and numerous other uses; from camel's hair and sheep's wool we weave cloth, hangings, carpets, etc.; from the horns of cattle we make cups and articles of ornament or use; and camels, horses, donkeys, mules, etc., are used for riding, carrying loads, or drawing vehicles.



To drink ; there are, in them,  
(Besides), numerous (other)  
Benefits for you ;  
And of their (meat) ye eat ;

22. And on them, as well as  
In ships, ye ride.

## SECTION 2.

23. (Further, We sent a long line  
Of prophets for your instruction).<sup>2882</sup>  
We sent Noah to his people :<sup>2883</sup>  
He said, "O my people!  
Worship God! Ye have  
No other god but Him.  
Will ye not fear (Him)?"<sup>2884</sup>

24. The chiefs of the Unbelievers  
Among his people said :  
"He is no more than a man  
Like yourselves : his wish is  
To assert his superiority  
Over you : if God had wished<sup>2885</sup>  
(To send messengers),  
He could have sent down  
Angels : never did we hear  
Such a thing (as he says),  
Among our ancestors of old."

25. (And some said) : "He is"<sup>2886</sup>  
Only a man possessed :  
Wait (and have patience)  
With him for a time."

وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا مَنَافِعُ كَثِيرَةٌ  
وَمِنْهَا تَأْكُلُونَ ۝

۝ ۲۲ - وَعَلَيْهَا وَعَلَى الْفُلْكِ تُحْمَلُونَ ۝

۲۳ - وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ  
فَقَالَ يَاقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ  
مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهِ غَيْرُهُ أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ۝

۲۴ - فَقَالَ الْمَلَأُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ قَوْمِهِ  
مَا هَذَا إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُكُمْ يُرِيدُ  
أَنْ يَتَفَضَّلَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ  
لَأَنْزَلَ مَلَائِكَةً ۚ  
مَا سَمِعْنَا بِهَذَا فِي آبَائِنَا الْأَوَّلِينَ ۝

۲۵ - إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْارْجُلُ بِهِ جُنَّةٌ  
فَرَبُّوْهُ حَتَّىٰ حِينٍ ۝

2882. The material gifts having been mentioned, which we receive from a wise and kindly Providence, our attention is now directed to God's Providence in spiritual matters. He sent Teachers to instruct and guide us, and though they were mocked, rejected, and accused of falsehood and selfishness, they were protected by God, and God's Truth at length prevailed.

2883. "People" here is almost equivalent to "contemporaries".

2884. Cf. vii. 59. To fear God is to lead righteous lives and eschew evil.

2885. They attribute altogether wrong motives to him (such as would have actuated them themselves), in saying that he was trying to establish his own personal superiority over them by his preaching. Then they accuse him of falsehood in claiming to bring a message of God. "If", they say, "God had wished to send us messengers, He would have sent angels, not a man-like ourselves and from among ourselves. Our ancestors did not worship One God: why should we?"

2886. I construe this to be a speech of another group among them. They thought he was mad, and best left alone. His madness would run out, or he would come to an evil end.

26. (Noah) said: "O my Lord!  
Help me: for that they  
Accuse me of falsehood!"

٢٦- قَالَ رَبِّ انصُرْنِي بِمَا كُذِّبْتُ ۝

27. So We inspired him  
(With this message): "Construct  
The Ark within Our sight<sup>2887</sup>  
And under Our guidance: then  
When comes Our command,  
And the fountains of the earth<sup>2888</sup>  
Gush forth, take thou on board  
Pairs of every species, male<sup>2889</sup>  
And female, and thy family—  
Except those of them  
Against whom the Word  
Has already gone forth:<sup>2890</sup>  
And address Me not  
In favour of the wrong-doers;  
For they shall be drowned  
(In the Flood).

٢٧- فَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِ أَنْ اصْنَعْ  
الْفُلْكَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا ۖ وَوَحْيُنَا  
فَإِذَا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا وَفَارَ التَّنُّورُ  
فَأَسْلَفْ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ  
وَأَهْلَكَ إِلَّا مَنْ سَبَقَ عَلَيْهِ الْقَوْلُ  
مِنْهُمْ ۖ  
وَلَا تَخَاطَبْنِي فِي الدِّينِ ۚ ظَلَمُوا ۖ  
إِنَّهُمْ مُّعْرِضُونَ ۝

28. And when thou hast embarked<sup>2891</sup>  
On the Ark—thou and those  
With thee,—say: "Praise be  
To God, Who has saved us  
From the people who do wrong."

٢٨- فَإِذَا اسْتَوَيْتَ أَنْتَ وَمَنْ مَعَكَ عَلَى  
الْفُلْكَ فَقُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي  
نَجَّسَنَا مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ۝

29. And say: "O my Lord!<sup>2892</sup>  
Enable me to disembark  
With Thy blessing: for Thou  
Art the Best to enable (us)  
To disembark."

٢٩- وَقُلْ رَبِّ انزِلْنِي مُنْزَلًا مُبَارَكًا  
وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْمُنْزِلِينَ ۝

30. Verily in this there are  
Signs (for men to understand);  
(Thus) do We try (men).<sup>2893</sup>

٣٠- إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ  
وَأَنْ كُنَّا لَبْتَائِلِينَ ۝

2887. Cf. this whole passage with xi. 35—48, and notes thereon.

2888. See n. 1533 to xi. 40, where the word *Tannūr* is explained.

2889. See n. 1534 to xi. 40.

2890. See n. 1535 to xi. 40.

2891. For *istawā* see n. 1386 to x. 3. Here the meaning is: mounted on board, ascended, embarked.

2892. This second prayer was inspired when the Flood subsided, and the time came for disembarkation.

2893. Noah's contemporaries had all sorts of chances and warnings. But they refused to believe and perished. But God's Truth survived, and it went to the next and succeeding generations. Will not mankind understand?



37. "There is nothing but  
Our life in this world!  
We shall die and we live! <sup>2896</sup>  
But we shall never  
Be raised up again!

38. "He is only a man  
Who invents a lie  
Against God, but we  
Are not the ones  
To believe in him!" <sup>2897</sup>

39. (The prophet) said:  
"O my Lord! help me:  
For that they accuse me  
Of falsehood." <sup>2898</sup>

40. (God) said: "In but  
A little while, they  
Are sure to be sorry!" <sup>2899</sup>

41. Then the Blast <sup>2900</sup> overtook them  
With justice, and We made them  
As rubbish, of dead leaves <sup>2901</sup>  
(Floating on the stream of Time!)  
So away with the people  
Who do wrong!

42. When We raised after them  
Other generations.

43. No people can hasten  
Their term, nor can they  
Delay (it).

٣٧- إِنْ هِيَ إِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا

نُفُوتٌ وَنَحْيَا

وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَبْعُوثِينَ

٣٨- إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا رَجُلٌ افْتَرَى عَلَى اللَّهِ

كَذِبًا

وَمَا نَحْنُ لَهُ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ

٣٩- قَالَ رَبِّ انصُرْنِي بِمَا كَذَّبُونِ

٤٠- قَالَ عَمَّا قَلِيلٍ

يُصْصِحُونَ نَذِيرِينَ

٤١- فَالْخَذْلُ لَهُمُ الصَّيْحَةُ بِأَحَقِّ

فَعَلَمَهُمْ عَذَابٌ فَبَعْدَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ

٤٢- ثُمَّ أَنشَأْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ قُرُونًا آخَرِينَ

٤٣- مَا تَسْبِقُ مِنْ أَفْئَةٍ أَجَلَهَا وَمَا

يَسْتَأْخِرُونَ

2896. They seem to say: "There is no future life: that we shall die is certain; that we have this life is certain: some die, some are born, some live: and so the cycle continues: but how can dead men be raised to life?"

2897. "He is only a fool, and invents things, and attributes them to God's inspiration! We are too wise to believe such things!"

2898. See above, xxiii. 26. Every prophet is maligned and persecuted: it is always the same story with them, told in different ways.

2899. When the Punishment comes, they will be sorry for themselves, but it will be too late then.

2900. See xi. 66, and notes 1563 and 1561.

2901. *Guthā-m*: rubbish of dead leaves, or scum floating on a torrent.

44. Then sent We Our apostles  
In succession: every time  
There came to a people  
Their apostle, they accused him  
Of falsehood: so We made  
Them follow each other  
(In punishment): We made them  
As a tale (that is told):<sup>2902</sup>  
So away with a people  
That will not believe!

٢٢- ثُمَّ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا تَتْرًا  
كُلَّمَا جَاءَ أُمَّةٌ رُسُلُهُمْ كَذَّبُوهُ  
فَاتَّبَعْنَاهُمْ بَعْضُهُمْ بَعْضًا  
وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَحَادِيثًا  
فَبَعْدَ الْقَوْمِ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ○

45. Then We sent Moses  
And his brother Aaron,  
With Our Signs and  
Authority manifest,<sup>2903</sup>

٢٥- ثُمَّ أَرْسَلْنَا مُوسَى وَأَخَاهُ هَارُونَ  
بِآيَاتِنَا وَسُلْطَانٍ مُبِينٍ ○

46. To Pharaoh and his Chiefs:  
But these behaved insolently:  
They were an arrogant people.

٢٦- إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَئِهِ  
فَانْتَكَبُوا وَكَانُوا قَوْمًا عَالِينَ ○

47. They said: "Shall we believe  
In two men like ourselves?  
And their people are subject<sup>2904</sup>  
To us!"

٢٧- فَقَالُوا أَأَتُومِنُونَ بِلَشَرِّينَ وَمِثْلِنَا  
وَقَوْمُهُمَا لَنَا عِيبٌ ○

48. So they accused them.  
Of falsehood, and they became  
Of those who were destroyed.

٢٨- فَكَذَّبُواهُمَا فَكَانُوا مِنَ الْمُهْلَكِينَ ○

49. And We gave Moses  
The Book, in order that  
They might receive guidance.<sup>2905</sup>

٢٩- وَآتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ  
لَعَلَّهُمْ يَهْتَدُونَ ○

2902. Their habitations and their organisation have been wiped out. What remains is merely a vague story of their existence, a tale that is told. Where their name remains, which is not always the case, it is only a by-word, suggesting all that is unstable and ephemeral,—“to point a moral and adorn a tale”.

2903. Moses and Aaron had a twofold mission: (1) to Pharaoh and his Court, which failed because of Egyptian arrogance; (2) to the Israelites, for whom the Law was received on Mount Sinai, but they repeatedly rebelled against God. In both cases there were miracles (“Clear Signs”) and other proofs which showed that they came at God’s command and were inspired by His authority.

2904. Racial arrogance made the Egyptians say, ‘These men belong to a race which we hold in subjection as our slaves: how can we accept them as messengers of God?’

2905. Here the reference is to the second part of the mission of Moses, that to the Israelites, which the Israelites rendered ineffective by their want of faith. See n. 2903 above.

50. And We made  
The son of Mary  
And his mother  
As a Sign : <sup>2906</sup>  
We gave them both  
Shelter on high ground,  
Giving rest and security  
And furnished with springs. <sup>2907</sup>

٥- وَجَعَلْنَا ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ  
وَأُمَّةً آيَةً  
وَوَيْدْنَا إِلَى رِثْوَةٍ  
ذَاتِ قَرَارٍ وَمَعِينٍ ۝

C. 155.—The Brotherhood of Truth is one in all ages:

(xxiii, 51-92.) It is narrow men who create sects.  
Let them not think that the goods  
Of this world can shield them from evil  
Or its consequences. God's Truth and His Messenger  
Can be known to all: for He in His Mercy  
Has given us faculties and judgment, if we  
Would but use them. The Message is not  
New: all Creation proclaims it: High  
Above all is the Lord of Glory Supreme!

#### SECTION 4.

51. ② ye apostles! enjoy <sup>2908</sup>  
(All) things good and pure,  
And work righteousness:  
For I am well-acquainted  
With (all) that ye do.
52. And verily this Brotherhood  
Of yours is a single Brotherhood. <sup>2909</sup>  
And I am your Lord  
And Cherisher: therefore  
Fear Me (and no other).

٥- يَا أَيُّهَا الرُّسُلُ كُلُّوْا مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ  
وَاْعْمَلُوا صَاحِحًا  
إِنِّي بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ عَلِيمٌ ۝  
٥٢- وَإِنَّ هَذِهِ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً  
وَأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاتَّقُونِ ۝

2906. The virgin birth of Jesus was a miracle both for him and his mother. She was falsely accused of unchastity, but the child Jesus triumphantly vindicated her by his own miracles (xix. 27-33), and showed by his life the meanness of the calumny against his mother.

2907. There is no need to look far for the place where mother and child were given secure shelter. It is described in xix. 22-26. It was the place to which she withdrew to be delivered when time drew near. There was a fruitful palm-tree, evidently on high ground, for beneath it flowed a spring. She retired there in seclusion, and she and her child rested there until it was time for her to go to her people with her child.

2908. Literally, "eat". See n. 776 to v. 69. The men of God do not pose as ascetics, but receive gratefully all God's gifts, and show their gratitude by their righteous lives.

2909. Cf. xxi. 92-93. All prophets form one Brotherhood: their Message is one, and their religion and teaching are one; they serve the One True God, Who loves and cherishes them; and they owe their duty to Him and Him alone.

53. But people have cut off  
Their affair (of unity),  
Between them, into sects:  
Each party rejoices in that  
Which is with itself.<sup>2910</sup>

54. But leave them  
In their confused ignorance  
For a time.

55. ~~Do~~ they think that because  
We have granted them abundance  
Of wealth and sons,

56. We would hasten them  
On in every good? Nay,  
They do not understand.<sup>2911</sup>

57. ~~Verily~~ those who live  
In awe for fear of their Lord;

58. Those who believe  
In the Signs of their Lord;

59. Those who join not (in worship)  
Partners with their Lord;

60. And those who dispense  
Their charity with their hearts<sup>2912</sup>  
Full of fear, because  
They will return to their Lord;—

61. It is these who hasten  
In every good work,  
And these who are  
Foremost in them.

٥٣- تَتَقَطَّعُوا أَمْرَهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ زُبُرًا  
كُلُّ حِزْبٍ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ فَرِحُونَ ○

٥٤- فَذَرْهُمْ فِي غَمْرَتِهِمْ حَتَّى حِينٍ ○

٥٥- أَيْحَسِبُونَ أَنْكُنْزِيَهُمْ مِنْ  
مَنْ مَالٍ وَبَنِينَ ○

٥٦- نُسَارِعُ لَهُمْ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ  
بَلْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ○

٥٧- إِنْ الَّذِينَ هُمْ مِنْ خَشْيَةِ رَبِّهِمْ مُشْفِقُونَ

٥٨- وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ يَوَدُّونَ ○

٥٩- وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِرَبِّهِمْ لَا يُشْرِكُونَ ○

٦٠- وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْتُونَ مَا آتَوْا وَقُلُوبُهُمْ وَجَلَةٌ  
أَنَّهُمْ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ رَاجِعُونَ ○

٦١- أُولَٰئِكَ يُسْرِعُونَ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ  
وَهُمْ لَهَا سَابِقُونَ ○

2910. The people who began to trade on the names of the prophets cut off that unity and made sects; and each sect rejoices in its own narrow doctrine, instead, of taking the universal teaching of Unity from God. But this sectarian confusion is of man's making. It will last for a time, but the rays of Truth and Unity will finally dissipate it.

2911. Worldly wealth, power, and influence may be but trials. Let not their possessors think that they are in themselves things that will necessarily bring them happiness.

2912. Their hearts are full of reverence for God and fear lest their charity or their hearts be not good enough for acceptance before their Lord; for they have the certainty of a future life, in which they will stand before the Judgment Seat. They fear for their own worthiness, but they hope in Faith.

62. On no soul do We  
Place a burden greater  
Than it can bear: <sup>2913</sup>  
Before Us is a record  
Which clearly shows the truth: <sup>2914</sup>  
They will never be wronged.

۞ وَلَا تُكَلِّفُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا  
وَلَدَيْنَا كِتَابٌ يَنْطِقُ بِالْحَقِّ  
وَهُمْ لَا يَظْلَمُونَ ۝

63. But their hearts are  
In confused ignorance <sup>2915</sup>  
Of this; and there are,  
Besides that, deeds of theirs, <sup>2916</sup>  
Which they will (continue)  
To do,—

۞ بَلْ قُلُوبُهُمْ فِي غَمْرَةٍ مِنْ هَذَا  
وَلَهُمْ أَعْمَالٌ مِنْ دُونِ ذَلِكَ  
هُمْ لَهَا عَمَلُونَ ۝

64. Until, when We seize  
In Punishment those of them  
Who received the good things  
Of this world, behold,  
They will groan in supplication!

۞ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَخَذْنَا مُتْرَفِيهِم بِالْعَذَابِ  
إِذَا هُمْ يَجْرُونَ ۝

65. (It will be said):  
"Groan not in supplication  
This day; for ye shall  
Certainly not be helped by Us.

۞ لَا تَجْعَلُوا الْيَوْمَ  
إِنْكُمْ قَوْمًا لَا تَنْصُرُونَ ۝

66. "My Signs used to be  
Rehearsed to you, but ye  
Used to turn back  
On your heels—

۞ قَدْ كَانَتْ آيَاتِي تُنْشَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ  
فَلَنْتُمْ عَلَىٰ أَعْقَابِكُمْ فَتَنْكُرُون ۝

67. "In arrogance: talking nonsense  
About the (Qur-ān), like one  
Telling fables by night." <sup>2917</sup>

۞ مُسْتَكْبِرِينَ  
بِهِ سِيمًا فَتَنْجُرُونَ ۝

2913. Cf. ii. 286 and n. 339.

2914. The record speaks clearly, and shows exactly what each soul has done and thought, and what is due to it in justice. The worst will receive full justice. The best will receive far more than their due.

2915. This is said of the Unbelievers who rejected Faith and rejoiced in the vanities of this world. In spite of the proclamation of Truth, they are doubtful of the future Life and Judgment.

2916. In addition to their rejection of Faith, they have against them positive deeds of wrongdoing, from which, on account of their contempt of the Light from God, they will not desist until they are sharply pulled up for punishment: and then repentance will be too late!

2917. *Sāmīr*: one who remains awake by night, one who passes the night in talk, or in the recital of stories or romances, a favourite amusement of the Days of Ignorance.



68. Do they not ponder over  
The Word (of God), or  
Has anything (new) come  
To them that did not  
Come to their fathers of old ? 2918

٦٨- أَلَمْ يَكُنْ يَدَّبُرُوا الْقَوْلَ  
أَمْ جَاءَهُمْ مَا لَمْ يَأْتِ آبَاءَهُمُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ۚ

69. Or do they not recognise  
Their Apostle, that they  
Deny him ?

٦٩- أَمْ لَمْ يَعْرِفُوا رَسُولَهُمْ  
فَهُمْ لَهُ مُنْكَرُونَ ۚ

70. Or do they say, " he is  
Possessed " ? Nay, he has  
Brought them the Truth,  
But most of them  
Hate the Truth.

٧٠- أَمْ يَقُولُونَ بِهِ جِنَّةٌ  
بَلْ جَاءَهُمُ بِالْحَقِّ  
وَأَكْثَرُهُمْ لِلْحَقِّ كَارِهُونَ ۚ

71. If the Truth had been  
In accord with their desires,  
Truly the heavens and the earth,  
And all beings therein  
Would have been in confusion 2919  
And corruption ! Nay, We  
Have sent them their admonition,  
But they turn away  
From their admonition.

٧١- وَلَوْ أَتَبَعَ الْحَقُّ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ  
لَفَسَدَتِ السَّمَوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَمَنْ  
فِيهِنَّ ۚ

72. Or is it that thou  
Askest them for some 2920  
Recompense ? But the recompense  
Of thy Lord is best :  
He is the Best of those  
Who give sustenance.

بَلْ آتَيْنَاهُمْ بِذِكْرِهِمْ  
فَهُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِهِمْ مُعْرِضُونَ ۚ  
٧٢- أَمْ تَسْأَلُهُمْ خَرْجًا  
فَخَرَجَ لَكَ خَيْرٌ ۚ  
وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الرِّزْقَيْنِ ۚ

73. But verily thou callest them  
To the Straight Way ;

٧٣- وَإِنَّكَ لَتَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ۚ

2918. If they ponder over the matter, they will find that God's Message to humanity is as old as Adam. It is good for all ages. It never grows old, and it is never new.

2919. God is All-Wise and All-Good, and His architecture of the universe is on a perfect Plan. If these poor, low, selfish, ignorant creatures were to plan it according to their hearts' desires, it would be a dreadful world, full of confusion and corruption.

2920. This is the last of the questions, beginning with xxiii. 68 above, showing the absurdity of the position taken up by the Unbelievers. (1) The Message of God is as old as humanity: why do they fight shy of it? (2) They have known their Apostle to be true and righteous: why do they deny him? (3) Is it madness to bring the bitter Truth before them? (4) Does the Prophet ask any worldly reward from them? If not, why do they reject his unselfish efforts for their own good?

74. And verily those who  
Believe not in the Hereafter  
Are deviating from that Way.

وَالَّذِينَ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ  
عَنِ الصِّرَاطِ لَكِبُونَ ٧٤

75. If We had mercy on them  
And removed the distress<sup>2921</sup>  
Which is on them, they  
Would obstinately persist  
In their transgression,  
Wandering in distraction  
To and fro.

وَلَوْ رَحِمْنَاهُمْ وَكَشَفْنَا مَا بِهِمْ مِنْ  
ضُرٍّ  
لَّجَؤُوا فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ  
يَعْمَهُونَ ٧٥

76. We inflicted Punishment<sup>2922</sup>  
On them, but they  
Humbled not themselves  
To their Lord, nor do they  
Submissively entreat (Him) !—

وَلَقَدْ أَخَذْنَاهُم بِالْعَذَابِ  
فَمَا اسْتَكْبَرُوا لِرَبِّهِمْ  
وَمَا يَتَضَرَّعُونَ ٧٦

77. Until We open on them  
A gate leading to  
A severe Punishment : then  
Lo ! they will be plunged  
In despair therein !<sup>2923</sup>

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ بَابًا  
ذَا عَذَابٍ شَدِيدٍ  
إِذَا هُمْ فِيهِ مُبَسِّرُونَ ٧٧

#### SECTION 5.

78. It is He Who has created  
For you (the faculties of)  
Hearing, sight, feeling<sup>2924</sup>  
And understanding : little thanks  
It is ye give !

وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنْشَأَ لَكُمْ  
السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ  
قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ ٧٨

2921. The reference is to a very severe famine felt in Mecca, which was attributed by the Unbelievers to the presence of the holy Prophet among them and his preaching against their gods. As this is a Meccan Sūra, the famine referred to must be that described by Ibn Kathīr as having occurred in the 8th year of the Mission, say about four years before the Hijra. There was also a post-Hijra famine, which is referred to by Bukhārī, but that was a later event.

2922. Some Commentators understand the battle of Badr to be meant here : if so, this particular verse would be of the Medina period. But it is better to understand it as referring to the same "distress" as in the preceding verse, or to punishments in general, which obstinate sinners refuse to take as warnings given to them to mend their ways and turn in repentance to God.

2923. Cf. vi. 44. If the little trials in the present life will not open their eyes, will great trials do so? Unfortunately they only cause in the wicked a feeling of despair. In the final Punishment after the Judgment, it will be too late for them to repent, and despair will be their only lot.

2924. As elsewhere, "heart" is to be understood as the seat both of feeling and intelligence. 'All the means by which knowledge can be gathered, judgment formed, and goodness cultivated, are provided for you by God. If you were grateful, you would use those in His service, which is expressed in your service to your fellow-men. But instead you ignore these gifts, question God's Providence, and blaspheme against Him !'

79. And He has multiplied you  
Through the earth, but to Him  
Shall ye be gathered back.
80. It is He Who gives  
Life and death, and to Him  
(Is due) the alternation <sup>2925</sup>  
Of Night and Day:  
Will ye not then understand?
81. On the contrary they say  
Things similar to what  
The ancients said. <sup>2926</sup>
82. They say: "What! When we  
Die and become dust and bones,  
Could we really be  
Raised up again?"
83. "Such things have been promised  
To us and to our fathers  
Before! They are nothing  
But tales of the ancients!"
84. Say: "To whom belong  
The earth and all beings therein?  
(Say) if ye know!"
85. They will say, "To God!"  
Say: "Yet will ye not  
Receive admonition?" <sup>2927</sup>
86. Say: "Who is the Lord  
Of the seven heavens,  
And the Lord of the Throne  
(Of Glory) Supreme?" <sup>2928</sup>
- ٧٩- وَهُوَ الَّذِي ذَكَّرَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ  
وَالْيَوْمِ تُخْشَرُونَ ○
- ٨٠- وَهُوَ الَّذِي يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ  
وَلَهُ اخْتِلَافُ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ  
أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ○
- ٨١- بَلْ قَالُوا مِثْلَ مَا قَالَ الْأَوَّلُونَ ○
- ٨٢- قَالُوا إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا إِفْتَاءُ بَنَاتِنَا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا وَعِظَامًا  
مَرَاتًا لَيَبْعُوْنَ ○
- ٨٣- لَقَدْ وُعِدْنَا نَحْنُ وَآبَاؤُنَا هَذَا مِنْ  
قَبْلُ إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ○
- ٨٤- قُلْ لِمَنِ الْأَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيهَا  
إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ○
- ٨٥- سَيَقُولُونَ لِلَّهِ  
قُلْ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ ○
- ٨٦- قُلْ مَنْ رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ السَّبْعِ  
وَرَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ ○

2925. The alternation of Night and Day stands here as a symbol for all the beneficent processes of Nature provided by God for the comfort and growth of man's outer and inner life.

2926. And they are the more culpable, as they have received a later and completer revelation. Why should they now stand on the primitive ideas of their ancestors?

2927. If their argument is that such things about a future life cannot be known or proved, they are referred to the things which are actually before them. The tangible things of the earth—can they postulate their order or government except by a Power or Force or Energy outside them? They will admit that there is such a Power or Force or Energy. We call it God. Go a step further. We see a sublime Universe in the heavens above, stretching far, far beyond our ken. They will admit its existence and its grandeur. We ask them to entertain a feeling of reverence for the Power behind it, and to understand their own littleness and their dependence upon that Power.

2928. Cf. ix. 129.

87. They will say, "(They belong)  
To God." Say: "Will ye not  
Then be filled with awe?" <sup>2929</sup>

٨٧- سَيَقُولُونَ لِلّٰهِ  
قُلْ اَكَلَا تَتَّقُونَ

88. Say: "Who is it in whose  
Hands is the governance  
Of all things,—who protects  
(All), but is not protected  
(Of any)? (Say) if ye know."

٨٨- قُلْ مَنْ مِّنْ بِيَدِهِ مَلَكُوتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ  
وَهُوَ يُخَيِّرُ وَلَا يُجَاوِزُ عَلَيْهِ  
اِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

89. They will say, "(It belongs)  
To God." Say: "Then how  
Are ye deluded?" <sup>2930</sup>

٨٩- سَيَقُولُونَ لِلّٰهِ  
قُلْ فَاَنى تُضِلُّونَ

90. ~~We~~ We have sent them the Truth:  
But they indeed practise  
Falsehood!

٩٠- بَلْ اَتَيْنَهُم بِالْحَقِّ  
وَاِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ

91. No son did God beget,  
Nor is there any god  
Along with Him: (if there were  
Many gods), behold, each god  
Would have taken away  
What he had created,  
And some would have  
Lorded it over others! <sup>2931</sup>  
Glory to God! (He is free)  
From the (sort of) things  
They attribute to Him!

٩١- مَا اخَذَ اللّٰهُ مِنْ وَلَدٍ  
وَمَا كَانَ مَعَهُ مِنْ اِلٰهٍ  
اِذَا الذَّهَبَ كُلُّ اِلٰهٍ بِمَا خَلَقَ  
وَلَعَلَّا بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ  
سُبْحٰنَ اللّٰهِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ

92. He knows what is hidden  
And what is open: too high  
Is He for the partners  
They attribute to Him! <sup>2932</sup>

٩٢- عَلِيمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ  
فَتَعَلَّىٰ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ

2929. See n. 2917 above. 'If this great and glorious Universe inspires you with awe, surely the Power behind is more worthy of your awe, especially if you compare your dependence and its dependence upon Him.'

2930. 'The order and unity of purpose in the Universe argue unity of design and goodness in its Maker. Is it not then sheer madness for you to run after false fancies and fail to understand and obey His Will? It is delusion in you to seek other than God.'

2931. Cf. xvii, 42. The multiplicity of gods is intellectually indefensible, considering the unity of Design and Purpose in His wonderful Universe.

2932. To suppose that God has a son or family or partners or companions is to have a low idea of God, Who is high above all such relationships. He is the One True God, and there can be none to compare with Him.

C. 156.—Let us eschew evil, but not  
 (xxiii. 93-118.) Pay back evil in its own coin,  
 However great the temptation: no chance  
 Will there be to retrieve our conduct,  
 Once death cuts us off. Then we shall only  
 Have to wait for Judgment: none can pass  
 That Barrier: our deeds will be weighed,  
 And happy those whose good weighs more  
 In the scale than ill. Only Faith and Goodness  
 Will prevail in the end: so glory to the Lord  
 Of the Throne exalted of Mercy and Honour !

## SECTION 6.

93. Say: "O my Lord !  
 If Thou wilt show me  
 (In my lifetime) that which  
 They are warned against,—<sup>2933</sup>

٩٣- قُلْ رَبِّ  
 إِنَّمَا تُرِيدُنِي مَا يُوعَدُونَ ۝

94. "Then, O my Lord ! put me not  
 Amongst the people  
 Who do wrong !"

٩٤- رَبِّ فَلَا تَجْعَلْنِي فِي الْقَوْمِ  
 الظَّالِمِينَ ۝

95. And We are certainly able  
 To show thee (in fulfilment)  
 That against which they are  
 warned.

٩٥- وَلَآ إِنَّا عَلَىٰ أَن نُّرِيكَ  
 مَا نَعِدُهُمْ لَقْدَارُونَ ۝

96. Repel evil with that<sup>2934</sup>  
 Which is best: We are  
 Well acquainted with  
 The things they say.

٩٦- إِذْفَعُ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ السَّيِّئَةِ  
 نَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَصِفُونَ ۝

97. And say "O my Lord !  
 I seek refuge with Thee

٩٧- وَقُلْ رَبِّ أَعُوذُ بِكَ

1933. In the first instance, this applied to the holy Apostle. His subsequent Hijrat from Mecca and the eventual overthrow of the Meccan oligarchy amply prove the fulfilment of the prophecy. But in general meaning it applies to all. We are taught that evil will be visited with a terrible punishment, not only in a future life, but in this very life when its cup is full and the time comes for punishment in God's Plan. If it has to come while we are still on the scene of this life, we are asked to pray that we may not be found in the company of those who draw such punishment on themselves. In other words we must eschew the society of evil ones.

1934. Whether people speak evil of you, in your presence or behind your back, or they do evil to you in either of those ways, all is known to God. It is not for you to punish. Your best course is not to do evil in your turn, but to do what will best repel the evil. Two evils do not make a good.

From the suggestions  
Of the Evil Ones,<sup>2935</sup>

98. "And I seek refuge with Thee  
O my Lord! lest they  
Should come near me."

99. (When Falsehood will they be)<sup>2936</sup>  
Until, when death comes  
To one of them, he says:  
"O my Lord! send me back<sup>2937</sup>  
(To life),—

100. "In order that I may  
Work righteousness in the  
things<sup>2938</sup>  
I neglected."—"By no means!  
It is but a word he says."<sup>2939</sup>  
Before them is a Partition<sup>2940</sup>  
Till the Day they are  
Raised up.

101. When when the Trumpet  
Is blown, there will be  
No more relationships  
Between them that day,  
Nor will one ask after another!<sup>2941</sup>

مِنْ هَزَبِ الشَّيْطَانِ ۝

٩٨- وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ رَبِّ أَنْ يَحْضُرُونِ ۝

٩٩- حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَ أَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ  
قَالَ رَبِّ ارْجِعُونِ ۝

١٠٠- لَعَلِّي أَعْمَلُ صَالِحًا فِيمَا تَرَكْتُ  
كَلَّا إِنَّهَا كَلِمَةٌ هُوَ قَائِلُهَا  
وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِهِمْ يَرْزُقُ  
إِلَى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ ۝

١٠١- فَإِذَا نُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ  
فَلَآ أَسْبَابَ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ  
وَلَا يَنْسَأُ لَوْنٌ ۝

2935. But in any case, shun evil for yourself, and you cannot do this without seeking the help and protection of God. Not only must you shun all promptings of evil, but you must shun its proximity. It may be that in retaliating on evil, or even in your curiosity to discover what evil is, you may fall into evil yourself. You should avoid going near it or anything which brings it near to you. And in this matter you should seek God's help.

2936. This verse I think connects on with xxiii. 90 above. Though God proclaims His Truth everywhere, the wicked cling to Falsehood until they face the reality of Death.

2937. The verb is in the plural in Arabic, which is construed either (1) as an emphatic form, as if the singular were repeated, or (2) as a plural of respect, though such a plural is not ordinarily used in addressing God, or (3) as a plural addressed to the angels, after the address to God in "O my Lord!"

2938. The unrighteous will ask for another chance. But it will be too late then. The time for repentance will then have passed.

2939. Their request will mean nothing. It will be treated merely as an empty word of excuse. They had plenty of chances in this life. Not only did they reject them, but they did not even believe in God or ask for His assistance.

2940. *Barzakh*: a partition, a bar or barrier; the place or state in which people will be after death and before Judgment. Cf. xxv. 53 and lv. 20. Behind them is the barrier of death, and in front of them is the *Barzakh*, partition, a quiescent state until the judgment comes.

2941. The old relationships of the world will then be dissolved. 'Each soul will stand on its merits.

102. Then those whose balance  
(Of good deeds) is heavy,—  
They will attain salvation: <sup>2942</sup>
103. But those whose balance  
Is light, will be those  
Who have lost their souls; <sup>2943</sup>  
In Hell will they abide.
104. The Fire will burn their faces,  
And they will therein  
Grin, with their lips displaced. <sup>2944</sup>
105. "Were not Our Signs rehearsed  
To you, and ye did but  
Treat them as falsehoods?"
106. They will say: "Our Lord!  
Our misfortune overwhelmed us, <sup>2945</sup>  
And we became a people  
Astray!"
107. "Our Lord! Bring us out  
Of this: if ever we return  
(To evil), then shall we be  
Wrong-doers indeed!"
108. He will say: "Be ye  
Driven into it (with ignominy)!  
And speak ye not to Me! <sup>2946</sup>
109. "A part of my servants  
There was, who used to pray,
- ۱۰۲۔ فَمَنْ ثَقُلَتْ مَوَازِينُهُ  
فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ
- ۱۰۳۔ وَمَنْ خَفَّتْ مَوَازِينُهُ فَأُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ  
خَسِرُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ فِي جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدُونَ
- ۱۰۴۔ تَلْفَحُ وُجُوهَهُمُ النَّارُ  
وَهُمْ فِيهَا كَالِحُونَ
- ۱۰۵۔ أَلَمْ تَكُنْ أَيْتِي تَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ  
فَكَذَّبُوا بِهَا تَكْذِبُونَ
- ۱۰۶۔ قَالُوا رَبَّنَا غَلَبَتْ عَلَيْنَا شِقْوَتُنَا  
وَكُنَّا قَوْمًا ضَالِّينَ
- ۱۰۷۔ رَبَّنَا أَخْرِجْنَا مِنْهَا  
فَإِنَّا عَدُوْنَا قَاتِلُومُونَ
- ۱۰۸۔ قَالَ احْسَبُوا فِيهَا  
وَلَا تُكَلِّمُونِ
- ۱۰۹۔ إِنَّهُ كَانَ فَرِيقٌ مِّنْ عِبَادِي يَقُولُونَ

2942. Good and evil deeds will be weighed against each other. If the good deeds prevail, the soul will attain *faizah*, i.e., prosperity, well-being, bliss, or salvation; if the contrary, there will be the misery and anguish of Hell.

2943. The loss or perdition will not mean that they will die and feel no more: xiv. 17. The punishment will mean nothing, if there was no sensibility, but total annihilation.

2944. That is to say, their faces will be disfigured with anguish, and their lips will quiver and fall out of place, exposing their teeth.

2945. 'The evil in us conquered us; it was our misfortune that we surrendered to evil, and went astray.' They forget that it was by their own deliberate choice that they surrendered to evil, and they are reminded in verses 109-110 of the ridicule with which they covered godly men in their life on earth.

2946. After their flouting of God's Signs and their mockery of godly men on earth, they have forfeited their right to plead for mercy before God's Throne.

'Our Lord! we believe;  
Then do Thou forgive us,  
And have mercy upon us:  
For Thou art the Best  
Of those who show mercy!'

رَبَّنَا آمَنَّا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا  
وَارْحَمْنَا وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الرَّاحِمِينَ ٢٩٧

110. "But ye treated them  
With ridicule, so much so  
That (ridicule of) them made  
Forget My Message while <sup>you</sup> <sup>2947</sup>  
Ye were laughing at them!

۱۱۰- فَأَتَخَذْتُمْ لَهُمْ سَهْوًا  
حَتَّىٰ أَنْسَوْنَ ذِكْرِي  
وَكُنْتُمْ مِنْهُمْ تَضَلُّونَ ٢٩٧

111. "I have rewarded them  
This day for their patience  
And constancy: they are indeed  
The ones that have achieved  
Bliss..."

۱۱۱- إِنِّي جَزَيْتُهُمُ الْيَوْمَ بِمَا صَبَرُوا  
إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ الْفَائِزُونَ ٢٩٨

112. He will say: <sup>2948</sup> "What number  
Of years did ye stay  
On earth?"

۱۱۲- قُلْ كَمْ لَبِثْتُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ عَدَدَ  
سِنِينَ ٢٩٨

113. They will say: "We stayed  
A day or part of a day:  
But ask those who  
Keep account."

۱۱۳- قَالُوا لَبِثْنَا يَوْمًا أَوْ بَعْضُ يَوْمٍ  
فَسْأَلِ الْعَادِّينَ ٢٩٩

114. He will say: "Ye stayed  
Not but a little,—  
If ye had only known!

۱۱۴- قُلْ إِنْ لَبِثْتُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا  
لَوْ أَنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ٣٠٠

115. "Did ye then think  
That We had created you

۱۱۵- أَلَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنَّمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ

2947. Literally, 'they made you forget My Message'. The ungodly were so occupied in the backbiting and ridicule of the godly that the godly themselves became the unconscious cause of the ungodly forgetting the warnings declared by God against those who do not treat His Signs seriously. Thus evil often brings about its own ruin through the instrumentality of those whom it would make its victims.

2948. The usual Indian reading is "Qāla", "He will say". This follows the Kūfa Qirāat. The Baṣra Qirāat reads "Qul", "Say" (in the imperative). The point is only one of grammatical construction. See n. 2666 to xxi 4.

2949. The question and answer about Time imply two things. (1) The attention of the ungodly is drawn to the extremely short time of the life in this world, compared to the eternity which they face: they are made to see this, and to realise how mistaken they were in their comparative valuation of things spiritual and things material. (2) Time, as we know it now, will have faded away and appear as almost nothing. It is just a matter relative to this life of temporary probation. Cf. the experience of the Companions of the Cave: xviii. 19.



In jest, and that ye  
Would not be brought back  
To Us (for account)?”<sup>2950</sup>

116. Therefore exalted be God,  
The King, the Reality:  
There is no god but He,  
The Lord of the Throne  
Of Honour!

117. If anyone invokes, besides God,  
Any other god, he has  
No authority therefor;  
And his reckoning will be  
Only with his Lord!<sup>2951</sup>  
And verily the Unbelievers  
Will fail to win through!<sup>2952</sup>

118. So say: “O my Lord!  
Grant Thou forgiveness and mercy!  
For Thou art the Best  
Of those who show mercy!”

عَمَّا وَأَنْتَ كُمُ إِلَيْنَا لَا تُرْجَعُونَ ۝

۱۱۶- فَتَعَلَى اللَّهِ الْمَلِكُ الْحَقُّ  
لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ

رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْكَرِيمِ ۝

۱۱۷- وَمَنْ يَدْعُ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ  
لَا بُرْهَانَ لَهُ بِهِ

فَوَالسَّابِقِ السَّابِقِ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ  
إِنَّهُ لَا يَفْصَحُ الْكَافِرُونَ ۝

۱۱۸- وَقُلْ رَبِّ اغْفِرْ وَارْحَمْ  
وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الرَّاحِمِينَ ۝



2950. God's Creation is not without a high serious purpose. It is not vain, or for mere play or sport. As far as man is concerned, the highest issues for him hang on his behaviour in this life. "Life is real, life is earnest, And the grave is not its goal", as Longfellow truly says. We must therefore earnestly search out God's Truth, encouraged by the fact that God's Truth is also, out of His unbounded mercy, searching us out and trying to reach us.

2951. Not with any one else whatever, as God is the only Reality. If men, out of the figments of their imagination, fancy other gods, they will be rudely undeceived. And God is Lord, i.e. our Cherisher as well as our Creator. In spite of all our shortcomings and our rebellions, He will forgive us if we go to Him not on our merits but on His grace.

2952. See the same word used in describing the contrast with the Believers, in the first verse of this Sūra. Righteousness must win and all opposition to it must fail. Thus the circle of the argument is completed.

INTRODUCTION TO SŪRA XXIV (*Nūr*).

The environmental and social influences which most frequently wreck our spiritual ideals have to do with sex, and especially with its misuse, whether in the form of unregulated behaviour, of false charges or scandals, or breach of the refined conventions of personal or domestic privacy. Our complete conquest of all pitfalls in such matters enables us to rise to the higher regions of Light and of God-created Nature, about which a mystic doctrine is suggested. This subject is continued in the next Sūra.

As the reprobation of false slanders about women (xxiv. 11-20) is connected with an incident that happened to Ḥaḍḥrat 'Āisha in A.H. 5-6, that fixes the chronological place of this Medina Sūra.

*Summary.*

Sex offences should be severely punished, but the strictest evidence should be required, and false slanderers are also worthy of punishment. Light talk about women reprobated (xxiv. 1-26, and C. 157).

Privacy should be respected, and the utmost decorum should be observed in dress and manners (xxiv. 27-34, and C. 158).

Parable of Light and Darkness: order and obedience in Nature point to the spiritual duty of man (xxiv. 35-57, and C. 159).

Domestic manners and manners in public or collective life all contribute to the highest virtues, and are part of our spiritual duties leading up to God (xxiv. 58-64, and C. 160).

C. 157.— Chastity is a virtue, for men and women,  
 (xxiv. 1-26,) Whether joined in marriage, or single,  
 Or widowed. The punishment for offences  
 In such matters should be public. No less  
 Grave is the launching of false charges  
 Or rumours against the fair reputation  
 Of women, or the spreading of such  
 Slanders, or the facile belief in them.  
 Evil is ever spreading its net.  
 Good men and women should ever be  
 On their guard, and pray for God's grace and mercy.

## Sūra XXIV.

Nur, or Light.

In the name of God, Most Gracious,  
Most Merciful.

1. **THE** Sūra which We  
Have sent down and <sup>2953</sup>  
Which We have ordained :  
In it have We sent down  
Clear Signs, in order that  
Ye may receive admonition.
2. **THE** woman and the man<sup>2954</sup>  
Guilty of adultery or  
fornication,—  
Flog each of them  
With a hundred stripes : <sup>2955</sup>  
Let not compassion move you  
In their case, in a matter  
Prescribed by God, if ye believe  
In God and the Last Day :  
And let a party  
Of the Believers  
Witness their punishment. <sup>2956</sup>
3. Let no man guilty of  
Adultery or fornication marry  
Any but a woman  
Similarly guilty, or an Unbeliever :  
Nor let any but such a man  
Or an Unbeliever  
Marry such a woman :  
To the Believers such a thing  
Is forbidden. <sup>2957</sup>



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

۱- سُورَةُ أَنْزَلْنَاهَا وَقَرَّضْنَاهَا  
وَأَنْزَلْنَا فِيهَا آيَاتٍ يَتَذَكَّرُ  
لَهَا كَثِيرٌ مِّنْ ذِكْرٍ

۲- الزَّانِيَةُ وَالزَّانِي  
فَأَجْلِدُوا كُلَّ وَاحِدٍ مِّنْهُمَا مِائَةَ جَلْدَةٍ  
وَلَا تَأْخُذْكُمْ بِهِمَا رَأْفَةٌ  
فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ إِن كُنتُمْ  
تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَلْيَشْهَدْ  
عَذَابَهُمَا طَائِفَةٌ مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

۳- الزَّانِي لَا يَنْكِحُ إِلَّا زَانِيَةً أَوْ مُشْرِكَةً  
وَالزَّانِيَةُ لَا يَنْكِحُ إِلَّا زَانٍ أَوْ مُشْرِكٌ  
وَحُرِّمَ ذَلِكَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

2953. It must not be thought that the checking of sex offences or of minor improprieties, that relate to sex or privacy, are matters that do not affect spiritual life in the highest degree. These matters are intimately connected with spiritual teaching such as God has sent down in this Sūra. The emphasis is on "We": these things are not mere matters of convenience, but God has ordained them for our observance in life.

2954. *Zinā* includes sexual intercourse between a man and a woman not married to each other. It therefore applies both to adultery (which implies that one or both of the parties are married to a person or persons other than the ones concerned) and to fornication, which, in its strict signification, implies that both parties are unmarried. The law of marriage and divorce is made easy in Islam, so that there may be the less temptation for intercourse outside the well-defined incidents of marriage. This makes for greater self-respect for both man and woman. Other sex offences are also punishable, but this Section applies strictly to *Zinā* as above defined.

2955. Cf. iv. 15, and n. 523.

2956. The punishment should be open, in order to be deterrent.

2957. Islam commands sex purity, for men and for women, at all times,—before marriage, during marriage, and after the dissolution of marriage. Those guilty of illicit practices are shut out of the marriage circle of chaste men and women.

4. **And** those who launch  
A charge against chaste women,  
And produce not four witnesses  
(To support their allegations),—  
Flog them with eighty stripes;  
And reject their evidence<sup>2958</sup>  
Ever after: for such men  
Are wicked transgressors;—

۴- وَالَّذِينَ يَزْمُونَ النِّسَاءَ ثُمَّ لَا  
يَأْتُوا بِأَرْبَعَةِ شُهَدَاءَ فَاجْلِدُوهُمْ ثَمَانِينَ  
جَلْدَةً وَلَا تَقْبَلُوا لَهُمْ شَهَادَةً أَبَدًا  
وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ

5. Unless they repent thereafter<sup>2959</sup>  
And mend (their conduct);  
For God is Oft-Forgiving,  
Most Merciful.

۵- إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ وَأَصْلَحُوا  
فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

6. **And** for those who launch  
A charge against their spouses,  
And have (in support)  
No evidence but their own,—<sup>2960</sup>

۶- وَالَّذِينَ يَزْمُونَ أَزْوَاجَهُمْ  
وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُمْ شُهَدَاءُ إِلَّا أَنْفُسُهُمْ

2958. The most serious notice is taken of people who put forward slanders or scandalous suggestions about women without adequate evidence. If anything is said against a woman's chastity, it should be supported by evidence twice as strong as would ordinarily be required for business transactions, or even in murder cases. That is, four witnesses would be required instead of two. Failing such preponderating evidence, the slanderer should himself be treated as a wicked transgressor and punished with eighty stripes. Not only would he be subjected to this disgraceful form of punishment, but he would be deprived of the citizen's right of giving evidence in all matters all his life, unless he repents and reforms, in which case he can be readmitted to be a competent witness.

2959. The punishment of stripes is inflicted in any case for unsupported slander. But the deprivation of the civic right of giving evidence can be cancelled by the man's subsequent conduct, if he repents, shows that he is sorry for what he did, and that he would not in future support by his statement anything for which he has not the fullest evidence. Secular courts do not enforce these principles, as their standards are lower than those which good Muslims set for themselves, but good Muslims must understand and act on the underlying principles, which protect the honour of womanhood. Abū Ḥanīfa considers that neither the stripes nor the incompetence for giving future evidence is cancelled by repentance, but only the spiritual stigma of being "wicked transgressors". This of course is the more serious punishment, though it cannot be enforced in the Courts.

2960. The case of married persons is different from that of outsiders. If one of them accuses the other of unchastity, the accusation partly reflects on the accuser as well. Moreover, the link which unites married people, even where differences supervene, is sure to act as a steadying influence against the concoction of false charges of unchastity, particularly where divorce is allowed (as in Islam) for reasons other than unchastity. Suppose a husband catches a wife in adultery. In the nature of things four witnesses—or even one outside witness—would be impossible. Yet after such an experience it is against human nature that he can live a normal married life. The matter is then left to the honour of the two spouses. If the husband can solemnly swear four times to the fact, and in addition invoke a curse on himself if he lies, that is *prima facie* evidence of the wife's guilt. But if the wife swears similarly four times and similarly invokes a curse on herself, she is in law acquitted of the guilt. If she does not take this step, the charge is held proved and the punishment follows. In either case the marriage is dissolved, as it is against human nature that the parties can live together happily after such an incident.

Their solitary evidence  
(Can be received) if they  
Bear witness four times  
(With an oath) by God  
That they are solemnly  
Telling the truth ;

7. And the fifth (oath)  
(Should be) that they solemnly  
Invoke the curse of God  
On themselves if they  
Tell a lie.

8. But it would avert  
The punishment from the wife,  
If she bears witness  
Four times (with an oath)  
By God, that (her husband)  
Is telling a lie ;

9. And the fifth (oath)  
Should be that she solemnly  
Invokes the wrath of God  
On herself if (her accuser)  
Is telling the truth.

10. If it were not  
For God's grace and mercy  
On you, and that God  
Is Oft-Returning,  
Full of wisdom,—  
(Ye would be ruined indeed).<sup>2961</sup>

## SECTION 2.

11. ~~Those~~ Those who brought forward<sup>2962</sup>  
The lie are a body

فَشَهَادَةُ أَحَدِهِمْ  
أَرْبَعُهُ شَهَدَتٍ بِاللَّهِ  
أَنَّهُ لَيْسَ الظَّالِمُ قَدِينٌ ۝

۷- وَالْخَامِسَةُ أَنَّ لَعْنَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ  
إِنْ كَانَ مِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ ۝

۸- وَيَذَرُوا عَنْهَا الْعَذَابَ  
أَنْ تَشْهَدَ أَرْبَعَهُ شَهَدَتٍ بِاللَّهِ  
أَنَّهُ لَيْسَ الْكَاذِبُ بِدِينٍ ۝

۹- وَالْخَامِسَةُ أَنَّ غَضَبَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهَا  
إِنْ كَانَ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ۝

۱۰- وَلَوْ لَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ  
وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ تَوَّابٌ  
حَكِيمٌ ۝

۱۱- إِنَّ الَّذِينَ جَاءُوا بِالْإِفْكِ عُصْبَةٌ

2961. Cf. xxiv. 11-14, and n. 2962, which illustrates the matter by a concrete instance.

2962. The particular incident here referred to occurred on the return from the expedition to the Banū Muṣṭaliq, A.H. 5-6. When the march was ordered, Ḥaḍhrat 'Aisha was not in her tent, having gone to search for a valuable necklace she had dropped. As her litter was veiled, it was not noticed that she was not in it, until the army reached the next halt. Meanwhile, finding the camp had gone, she sat down to rest, hoping that some one would come back to fetch her when her absence was noticed. It was night, and she fell asleep. Next morning she was found by Saḥwān, a Muhājir, who had been left behind the camp expressly to pick up anything inadvertently left behind. He put her on his camel and brought her, leading the camel on foot. This gave occasion to enemies to raise a malicious scandal. The ringleader among them was the chief of the Medina Hypocrites, 'Abdullah ibn Ubai, who is referred to in the last clause of this verse. He had other sins and enormities to his debit, and he was left to the spiritual punishment of an unrepentant sinner, for he died in that state. The minor tools were given the legal punishment of the law, and after penitence mended their lives. They made good.

Among yourselves: think it not  
To be an evil to you;  
On the contrary it is good <sup>2963</sup>  
For you: to every man  
Among them (will come  
The punishment) of the sin  
That he earned, and to him <sup>2964</sup>  
Who took on himself the lead  
Among them, will be  
A Penalty grievous.

12. Why did not the Believers—  
Men and women <sup>2965</sup>—when they  
Heard of the affair, put  
The best construction on it  
In their own minds  
And say, "This charge  
Is an obvious lie"?
13. Why did they not bring  
Four witnesses to prove it? <sup>2966</sup>  
When they have not brought  
The witnesses, such men,  
In the sight of God,  
(Stand forth) themselves as liars!
14. Were it not for the grace  
And mercy of God on you,  
In this world and the Hereafter,  
A grievous penalty would have  
Seized you in that ye rushed  
Glibly into this affair. <sup>2967</sup>
15. Behold, ye received it  
On your tongues,

فِيكُمْ لَا تَحْسَبُوهُ شَرًّا لَّكُمْ  
بَلْ هُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ  
لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مِّنْهُمْ مَا أَكْتَسَبَ مِنَ الْإِثْمِ  
وَالَّذِي تَوَلَّى كِبْرَهُ مِنْهُمْ  
لَهُ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ۝

١٢- لَوْ لَا إِذْ سَمِعْتُمُوهُ  
ظَنَّ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بِأَنفُسِهِمْ  
خَيْرًا  
وَقَالُوا هَذَا إِفْكٌ مُّبِينٌ ۝

١٣- لَوْ لَا جَاءُوا عَلَيْهِ بِأَرْبَعَةِ شُهَدَاءَ  
فَإِذَا لَمْ يَأْتُوا بِالشُّهَدَاءِ  
فَأُولَئِكَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ هُمُ الْكَذِبُونَ ۝

١٤- وَلَوْ لَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ  
فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ  
لَسَكُنْتُمْ فِي مَا أَنْتُمْ فِيهِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ۝

١٥- إِذْ تَلَقَّوْنَهُ بِأَلْسِنَتِكُمْ

2963. It is worse for a scandal to be whispered about with bated breath, than that it should be brought into the light of day and disproved.

2964. The ringleader: see n. 2962 above.

2965. Both men and women were involved in spreading the scandal. Their obvious duty was to put the best, not the worst, construction on the acts of one of the "mothers of the Believers".

2966. If any persons took it seriously, it was their duty to search for and produce the evidence, in the absence of which they themselves became guilty of slander.

2967. Cf. xxiv. 10 above. It was God's mercy that saved them from many evil consequences, both in this life and in the Hereafter,—in this life, because the Apostle's wise measures nipped in the bud any incipient estrangement between those nearest and dearest to him, and from a spiritual aspect in that the minor agents in spreading the scandal repented and were forgiven. No doubts and divisions, no mutual distrust, were allowed to remain in their hearts after the whole matter had been cleared up.

And said out of your mouths  
Things of which ye had  
No knowledge ; and ye thought  
It to be a light matter,  
While it was most serious  
In the sight of God.<sup>2968</sup>

16. And why did ye not,  
When ye heard it, say ?—  
" It is not right of us  
To speak of this :  
Glory to God ! this is  
A most serious slander ! " <sup>2969</sup>

17. God doth admonish you,  
That ye may never repeat  
Such (conduct), if ye  
Are (true) Believers.

18. And God makes the Signs  
Plain to you : for God  
Is full of knowledge and wisdom.

19. Those who love (to see)  
Scandal published broadcast  
Among the Believers, will have  
A grievous Penalty in this life  
And in the Hereafter : God  
Knows, and ye know not.<sup>2970</sup>

20. Were it not for the grace  
And mercy of God on you,

وَقُلُّوْا لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ عَزَّوَجَلَّ  
عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوْبِ ۝  
وَمَنْ يُّشْرِكْ بِاللّٰهِ فَقَدْ اٰثَمَ اِثْمًا عَظِيْمًا ۝

۱۶- وَلَوْ لَا اِذْ سَمِعْتُمُوْهُ قُلْتُمْ  
مَا يَكُوْنُ لَنَا اَنْ نَّقُوْلَ بِهٰذَا  
سُبْحٰنَكَ هٰذَا بُهْتٰنٌ عَظِيْمٌ ۝

۱۷- يُوْطِّئُكُمُ اللّٰهُ اَنْ تَعُوْذُوْا بِالْبَيْتِ  
اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ۝

۱۸- وَيُيَسِّرُ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ الْاٰيٰتِ  
وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ ۝

۱۹- اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يُحِبُّوْنَ اَنْ تُنۡشِطَ الْفَاحِشَةُ  
فِي الدِّيۡنِ اَمَلُوْا لَهُمْ عَذَابَ الْاَلَمِ ۚ فِى  
الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةِ وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ وَاَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ۝

۲۰- وَلَوْ لَا فَضْلُ اللّٰهِ عَلٰيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ

2968. There are three things here reprobated by way of spiritual teaching : (1) if others speak an evil word, that is no reason why you should allow it to defile your tongue; (2) if you get a thought or suspicion which is not based on your certain knowledge, do not give it currency by giving it expression ; and (3) others may think it is a small matter to speak lightly of something which blasts a person's character or reputation : in the eyes of God it is a most serious matter in any case, but specially when it involves the honour and reputation of pious women.

2969. The right course would have been to stop any further currency of false slanders by ignoring them and at least refusing to help in their circulation. The exclamation "*Subhānaka*", "Praise to Thee (O God!)", or "Glory to God!" is an exclamation of surprise and disavowal as much as to say, "We do not believe it! And we shall have nothing to do with you, O false slanderers!"

2970. What mischiefs can be planned by Evil to delude simple folk who mean no harm in their own minds but who by thoughtlessness are deluded step by step to become the instruments of Evil, may not be known to the most instructed of men, but it is all known to God. Man should therefore always be on his guard against the traps of Evil, and it is only God's grace that can save him.

And that God is  
Full of kindness and mercy,  
(Ye would be ruined indeed).<sup>2971</sup>

### SECTION 3.

21. **○** ye who believe!  
Follow not Satan's footsteps:  
If any will follow the footsteps  
Of Satan, he will (but) command  
What is shameful and wrong:  
And were it not for the grace  
And mercy of God on you,<sup>2972</sup>  
Not one of you would ever  
Have been pure: but God  
Doth purify whom He pleases:<sup>2973</sup>  
And God is One Who  
Hears and knows (all things).
22. Let not those among you  
Who are endued with grace  
And amplitude of means<sup>2974</sup>  
Resolve by oath against helping  
Their kinsmen, those in want,  
And those who have left

وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ رَوُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ ۝

٢١- يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوَاتِ  
الشَّيْطَانِ وَمَنْ يَتَّبِعْ خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ  
فَأِنَّهُ يُأْمُرُ بِالْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَلَوْلَا  
فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ مَا زَكَا  
مِنْكُمْ مِنْ أَحَدٍ أَبَدًا وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ  
يُزَكِّي مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ۝

٢٢- وَلَا يَأْتِلْ أُولُو الْفَضْلِ مِنْكُمْ  
وَالسَّعَةِ أَنْ يُؤْثِرُوا  
أُولَى الْقُرْبَى وَالْمَسْكِينِ

2971. Note the refrain that comes four times in this passage, "Were it not for the grace and mercy of God,...". Each time it has a different application. (1) In xxiv. 10, it was in connection with the accusation of infidelity by one of the spouses against the other: they were both reminded of God's mercy and warned against suspicion and untruth. (2) In xxiv. 14, the Believers were told to be wary of false rumours lest they should cause pain and division among themselves: it is God's grace that keeps them united. (3) Here is an admonition for the future: there may be conspiracies and snares laid by Evil against simple people: it is God's grace that protects them. (4) In xxiv. 21, the general warning is directed to the observance of purity in act and in thought, concerning one's self and concerning others: it is only God's grace that can keep that purity spotless, for He hears prayers and knows of all the snares that are spread in the path of the good.

2972. See last note.

2973. Spotless purity in thought, word, and deed, includes the disposition to put the best construction on the motives of others, so that we ascribe no evil motive to the seeming indiscretions of virtuous people. Such a high standard can only come by the grace of God, Who hears all prayers and knows all the temptations to which human nature is subject. His Will and Plan make both for spiritual protection and spiritual peace, and we must place ourselves trustingly in His hands.

2974. The immediate reference was to Ḥaḍhrat Abū Bakr, the father of Ḥaḍhrat 'Aisha. He was blessed both with spiritual grace from God and with ample means, which he always used in the service of Islam and of Muslims. One of the slanderers of Ḥaḍhrat 'Aisha turned out to be Miṣṭah, a cousin of Ḥaḍhrat Abū Bakr, whom he had been in the habit of supporting. Naturally Ḥaḍhrat Abū Bakr wished to stop that aid, but according to the highest standards of Muslim ethics he was asked to forgive and forget, which he did, with the happiest results to the peace and unity of the Muslim community. But the general application holds good for all time. A generous patron should not, in personal anger, withdraw his support even for serious faults if the delinquent repents and mends his ways. If God forgives us, who are we to refuse forgiveness to our fellows?



- Their homes in God's cause:  
Let them forgive and overlook.  
Do you not wish  
That God should forgive you?  
For God is Oft-Forgiving,  
Most Merciful.

23. Those who slander chaste women,  
Indiscreet but believing,<sup>2975</sup>  
Are cursed in this life  
And in the Hereafter:  
For them is a grievous Penalty,—

24. On the Day when their tongues,  
Their hands, and their feet  
Will bear witness against them<sup>2976</sup>  
As to their actions.

25. On that Day God  
Will pay them back  
(All) their just dues,  
And they will realise  
That God is  
The (very) Truth,  
That makes all things manifest.<sup>2977</sup>

26. Women impure are for men impure,  
And men impure for women  
impure;  
And women of purity  
Are for men of purity,  
And men of purity  
Are for women of purity:  
These are not affected

وَالْمُحْسِنِينَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلْيَعْفُوا  
وَلْيَصْطَحُوا أَلَا تُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ  
لَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ○

٢٣- إِنْ الَّذِينَ يَزْمُونَ الْمُحْصَنَاتِ  
الْغَفْلَاتِ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ لَعُنُوا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَ  
الْآخِرَةِ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ○

٢٤- يَوْمَ تَشْهَدُ عَلَيْهِمْ أَلْسِنُهُمْ وَأَيْدِيهِمْ  
وَأَرْجُلُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ○

٢٥- يَوْمَ تَنْقُصُ يَوْمَئِذٍ إِلَهُهُمْ أَلَيْسَ لَهُمُ الْحَقُّ  
وَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ  
هُوَ الْحَقُّ الْمُبِينُ ○

٢٦- الْحَافِظَاتُ لِلْغَيْبَاتِ  
وَالْحَافِظُونَ لِلْغَيْبَاتِ وَالطَّيِّبَاتِ  
وَالطَّيِّبِينَ وَالطَّيِّبُونَ لِلطَّيِّبَاتِ  
أُولَئِكَ مُبَرَّءُونَ

2975. Good women are sometimes indiscreet because they think of no evil. But even such innocent indiscretion lands them, and those who hold them dear, in difficulties. Such was the case with Ḥaḍhrat 'Āisha, who was in extreme pain and anguish for a whole month because of the slanders spread about her. Her husband and her father were also placed in a most awkward predicament, considering their position and the great work in which they were engaged. But unprincipled people, who start false slanders, and their unthinking tools who help in spreading such slanders, are guilty of the gravest spiritual offence, and their worst punishment is the deprivation of God's grace, which is the meaning of a state of Curse.

2976. Our own limbs and faculties are the strongest witnesses against us if we misuse them for evil deeds instead of the good deeds for which they were given to us.

2977. All that we thought of hiding will be clear as day before God's Judgment Seat, because He is the very essence of Truth and Reality. He is the true Light (xxiv 35), of which all physical light is merely a type or reflection.

By what people say: <sup>2978</sup>  
 For them there is forgiveness,  
 And a provision honourable. <sup>2979</sup>

مَنْ يَقُولُونَ  
 لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَرِزْقٌ كَرِيمٌ

- C. 158.—Privacy in the home is a nurse of virtue :  
 (xxiv. 27-34.) Respect it with dignity and decorum. Guard  
 Your eyes and thoughts with rules of modesty  
 In dress and manners : and learn from these  
 To keep your spiritual gaze from straying  
 To any but God. True marriage should teach  
 Us chastity and purity, and such  
 Are the virtues which lead us to the Light  
 Sublime which illuminates the world.

#### SECTION 4.

27. ﴿٢٧﴾ ye who believe !  
 Enter not houses other than  
 Your own, until ye have  
 Asked permission and saluted  
 Those in them : that is  
 Best for you, in order that  
 Ye may heed (what is becoming). <sup>2980</sup>

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَدْخُلُوا بُيُوتًا  
 غَيْرَ بُيُوتِكُمْ  
 حَتَّى تَسْتَأْذِنُوا وَتُسَلِّمُوا عَلَى أَهْلِهَا  
 ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ

28. If ye find no one <sup>2981</sup>  
 In the house, enter not  
 Until permission is given  
 To you : if ye are asked  
 To go back, go back:  
 That makes for greater purity

وَإِنْ لَمْ تَجِدُوا فِيهَا أَحَدًا فَلَا تَدْخُلُوهَا  
 حَتَّى يُؤْذَنَ لَكُمْ وَإِنْ قِيلَ لَكُمْ  
 ارجِعُوا فَأَرْجِعُوا هُوَ أَزْكَى

2978. The pure consort with the pure, and the impure with the impure. If the impure, out of the impurity of their thoughts or imaginations, impute any evil to the pure, the pure are not affected by it, but they should avoid all occasions for random talk.

2979. *Forgiveness* for any indiscretion which they may have innocently committed, and spiritual provision or protection against the assaults of Evil. It is also meant that the more the evil ones attempt to defame or slander them, the more triumphantly will they be vindicated and provided with the physical and moral good which will advance their real life.

2980. The conventions of propriety and privacy are essential to a refined life of goodness and purity. The English saying that an Englishman's home is his castle, suggests a certain amount of exclusiveness and defiance. The Muslim principle of asking respectful permission and exchanging salutations ensures privacy without exclusiveness, and friendliness without undue familiarity.

2981. That is, if no one replies : there may be people in the house not in a presentable state. Or, even if the house is empty, you have no right to enter it until you obtain the owner's permission, wherever he may be. The fact of your not receiving a reply does not entitle you to enter without permission. You should wait, or knock twice or three times, and withdraw in case no permission is received. If you are actually asked to withdraw, as the inmates are not in a condition to receive you, you should *à fortiori* withdraw, either for a time, or altogether, as the inmates may wish you to do. Even if they are your friends, you have no right to take them by surprise or enter against their wishes. Your own purity of life and conduct as well as of motives is thus tested.

For yourselves : and God  
Knows well all that ye do.

29. It is no fault on your part  
To enter houses not used  
For living in, which serve  
Some (other) use for you :<sup>2982</sup>  
For God has knowledge  
Of what ye reveal  
And what ye conceal.

30. Say to the believing men  
That they should lower  
Their gaze and guard<sup>2983</sup>  
Their modesty : that will make  
For greater purity for them :  
For God is well acquainted  
With all that they do.

31. And say to the believing women  
That they should lower  
Their gaze and guard<sup>2984</sup>  
Their modesty ; that they  
Should not display their  
Beauty and ornaments<sup>2985</sup> except  
What (must ordinarily) appear  
Thereof ; that they should

لَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ عَلِيمٌ ۝

٢٩- لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَدْخُلُوا بُيُوتًا  
غَيْرَ مَسْكُونَةٍ فِيهَا مَتَاعٌ لَكُمْ  
وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُونَ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تُكْتُمُونَ ۝

٣٠- قُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَغْضُضُوا مِنْ  
أَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ  
ذَلِكَ أَزْكَىٰ لَهُمْ  
إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا يَصْنَعُونَ ۝

٣١- وَقُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَغْضُضْنَ  
مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ  
وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ  
مِنْهَا وَلَا يَظُنَّ

2982. The rule about dwelling-houses is strict, because privacy is precious, and essential to a refined, decent, and well-ordered life. Such a rule of course does not apply to houses used for other useful purposes, such as an inn or caravanserai, or a shop, or a warehouse. But even here, of course, implied permission from the owner is necessary as a matter of common-sense. The question in this passage is that of refined privacy, not that of rights of ownership.

2983. The rule of modesty applies to men as well as women. A brazen stare by a man at a woman (or even at a man) is a breach of refined manners. Where sex is concerned, modesty is not only "good form" : it is not only to guard the weaker sex, but also to guard the spiritual good of the stronger sex.

2984. The need for modesty is the same in both men and women. But on account of the differentiation of the sexes in nature, temperaments, and social life, a greater amount of privacy is required for women than for men, especially in the matter of dress and the uncovering of the bosom.

2985. *Zinat* means both natural beauty and artificial ornaments. I think both are implied here, but chiefly the former. The woman is asked not to make a display of her figure or appear in undress except to the following classes of people : (1) her husband ; (2) her near relatives who would be living in the same house, and with whom a certain amount of *negligé* is permissible ; (3) her women, *i.e.*, her maid-servants, who would be constantly in attendance on her ; some Commentators include all believing women ; it is not good form in a Muslim household for women to meet other women, except when they are properly dressed ; (4) slaves, male and female, as they would be in constant attendance ; but this item would now be blank, with the abolition of slavery ; (5) old or infirm men-servants ; and (6) infants or small children before they get a sense of sex. Cf. also xxxiii, 59.

Draw their veils over  
 Their bosoms and not display  
 Their beauty except  
 To their husbands, their fathers,  
 Their husbands' fathers, their sons,  
 Their husbands' sons,  
 Their brothers or their brothers' sons,

Or their sisters' sons,  
 Or their women, or the slaves  
 Whom their right hands  
 Possess, or male servants  
 Free of physical needs,  
 Or small children who  
 Have no sense of the shame  
 Of sex; and that they  
 Should not strike their feet  
 In order to draw attention  
 To their hidden ornaments.<sup>2986</sup>  
 And O ye Believers!  
 Turn ye all together  
 Towards God, that ye  
 May attain Bliss.<sup>2987</sup>

32. **Mar**ry those among you  
 Who are single,<sup>2988</sup> or  
 The virtuous ones among  
 Your slaves, male or female:  
 If they are in poverty,  
 God will give them  
 Means out of His grace:  
 For God's bounty is for all,<sup>2989</sup>  
 And He knows all things.

يُخْبِرُهُنَّ عَلَى جُيُوبِهِنَّ  
 وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا  
 لِبُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَائِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَاءَ بُعُولَتِهِنَّ  
 أَوْ أَبْنَاءِهِنَّ أَوْ أَبْنَاءَ بُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ إِخْوَانِهِنَّ  
 أَوْ بَنِي إِخْوَانِهِنَّ  
 أَوْ بَنِي أَخَوَاتِهِنَّ أَوْ نِسَاءَهُنَّ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ  
 أَيْمَانُهُنَّ أَوِ التَّابِعِينَ غَيْرِ أُولَى الْإِرْبَةِ  
 مِنَ الرِّجَالِ أَوِ الطِّفْلِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يَظْهَرُوا  
 عَلَى عَوْرَاتِ النِّسَاءِ وَلَا يَضْرِبْنَ  
 بِأَرْجُلِهِنَّ لِيُعْلَمَ مَا يُخْفِينَ مِنْ زِينَتِهِنَّ  
 وَتَوَلَّوْا إِلَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ  
 لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ○

۳۲- وَأَنْكِحُوا الْأَيَامَىٰ مِنْكُمْ  
 وَالطَّالِقِينَ مِنْ عِبَادِكُمْ وَإِمَائِكُمْ  
 إِنْ يَكُونُوا فُقَرَاءَ يُعْطِهِمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ  
 وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ○

2986. It is one of the tricks of showy or unchaste women to tinkle their ankle ornaments, to draw attention to themselves.

2987. While all these details of the purity and good form of domestic life are being brought to our attention, we are clearly reminded that the chief object we should hold in view is our spiritual welfare. All our brief life on this earth is a probation, and we must make our individual, domestic, and social life all contribute to our holiness, so that we can get the real success and bliss which is the aim of our spiritual endeavour. Mystics understand the rules of decorum themselves to typify spiritual truths. Our soul, like a modest maiden, allows not her eyes to stray from the One True God. And her beauty is not for vulgar show, but for God.

2988. The subject of sex ethics and manners brings us to the subject of marriage. "Single" (*ayāmā*, plural of *Aiyim*) here means any one not in the bond of wedlock, whether unmarried or lawfully divorced, or widowed. If we can, we must marry in our own circle, but if we have not the means, there is no harm if we choose from a lower circle, provided our choice is determined by virtue. Poverty in the other party does not matter if there is virtue and love. A happily married man has the best wealth in a virtuous wife, and his very happiness makes him a better potential earner of wealth. A slave becomes free by marriage.

2989. Cf. v. 57. God's mercy is for all: it is not confined to a class or grade of people.

33. Let those who find not  
The wherewithal for marriage  
Keep themselves chaste, until  
God gives them means<sup>2990</sup>  
Out of His grace.  
And if any of your slaves  
Ask for a deed in writing  
(To enable them to earn  
Their freedom for a certain sum),  
Give them such a deed<sup>2991</sup>  
If ye know any good  
In them; yea, give them  
Something yourselves  
Out of the means which  
God has given to you.  
But force not your maids<sup>2992</sup>  
To prostitution when<sup>2993</sup> they desire  
Chastity, in order that ye  
May make a gain  
In the goods of this life.  
But if anyone compels them,  
Yet, after such compulsion,  
Is God Oft-Forgiving,  
Most Merciful (to them).<sup>2994</sup>

وَلْيَسْتَعْفِفِ الَّذِينَ لَا يَجِدُونَ لَكَامًا  
حَتَّى يُعْطِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ  
وَالَّذِينَ يَسْتَعْفِفُونَ الْكِتَابَ  
وَمِمَّا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ  
فَكَانُوا بَيْنَهُمْ أَنْ عَمِلْتُمْ فِيهِمْ خَيْرًا  
وَأَنْتُمْ مِنْ مَالِ اللَّهِ الَّذِي آتَاكُمْ  
وَلَا تُكْرِهُوا فَتَيَاتِكُمْ عَلَى الْبِغَاءِ  
إِنْ أَرَدْنَ مُحْضًا  
لِيَتَّبِعُوا عَرَضَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا  
وَمَنْ يَكْرِهْهُنَّ  
فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ مِنْ بَعْدِ أَكْرِهٍ  
عَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

34. ~~We~~ We have already sent down  
To you verses making things  
Clear, an illustration from (the story  
Of) people who passed away  
Before you, and an admonition  
For those who fear (God).<sup>2995</sup>

وَلَقَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكُمْ آيَاتٍ مُبِينَاتٍ  
وَمَثَلًا مِنَ الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ  
وَمَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ

2990. A Muslim marriage requires some sort of a dower for the wife. If the man cannot afford that, he must wait and keep himself chaste. It is no excuse for him to say that he must satisfy his natural cravings within or outside marriage. It must be within marriage.

2991. The law of slavery in the legal sense of the term is now obsolete. While it had any meaning, Islam made the slave's lot as easy as possible. A slave, male or female, could ask for conditional manumission by a written deed fixing the amount required for manumission and allowing the slave meanwhile to earn money by lawful means and perhaps marry and bring up a family. Such a deed was not to be refused if the request was genuine and the slave had character. Not only that, but the master is directed to help with money out of his own resources in order to enable the slave to earn his or her own liberty.

2992. Where slavery was legal, what is now called the "white slave traffic" was carried on by wicked people like 'Abdullāh ibn Ubai, the Hypocrite leader at Medina. This is absolutely condemned. While modern nations have abolished ordinary slavery, the "White Slave Traffic" is still a big social problem in individual States and before the League of Nations. Here it is absolutely condemned. No more despicable trade can be imagined.

2993. I have translated "in" (literally, "if") by "when", because this is not a conditional clause but an explanatory clause, explaining the meaning of "force". "Forcing" a person necessarily means that it is against the wish or inclination of the person forced. Even if they were to give a formal consent, it is not valid because the persons concerned are in (legal, or now) economic slavery.

2994. The poor unfortunate girls, who are victims of such a nefarious trade, will yet find mercy from God, Whose bounties extend to the lowest of His creatures.

2995. This prepares the way for the magnificent Verse of Light that follows, and its mystic meaning.

C. 159.—God is the Light of the heavens and the earth.  
(xxiv. 35-37.)

High above our petty evanescent lives,  
He illumines our souls with means that reach  
Our inmost being. Universal is  
His light, so pure and so intense  
That grosser beings need a veil  
To take His rays: His elect are e'er  
Absorbed in prayer and praise and deeds  
Of love, unlike the children of Darkness,  
Struggling in Depths profound of vanities  
False. All Nature sings to the glory  
Of God, and men of fraud and hypocrisy  
Are but rebels in the Kingdom of God.

### SECTION 5.

35. God is the Light<sup>2996</sup>  
Of the heavens and the earth.<sup>2997</sup>  
The parable of His Light  
Is as if there were a Niche  
And within it a Lamp:  
The Lamp enclosed in Glass:<sup>2998</sup>

هـ-الله نُّورُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ  
مِثْلُ نُورِ كَيْشْكُوفٍ فِيهَا مِصْبَاحٌ  
الْمِصْبَاحُ فِي زُجَاجَةٍ

2996. Embedded within certain directions concerning a refined domestic and social life, comes this glorious parable of Light, which contains layer upon layer of allegorical truth about spiritual mysteries. No notes can do adequate justice to its full meaning. Volumes have been written on this subject, the most notable being Imām Qazālī's *Mishkāt-ul-Anwār*. In these notes I propose to explain the simplest meaning of this passage, reserving a brief account of Qazālī's exposition for Appendix VIII (printed at the end of this Sūra).

2997. The physical light is but a reflection of the true Light in the world of Reality, and that true Light is God. We can only think of God in terms of our phenomenal experience, and in the phenomenal world, light is the purest thing we know. But physical light has drawbacks incidental to its physical nature: e.g. (1) it is dependent upon some source external to itself; (2) it is a passing phenomenon; if we take it to be a form of motion or energy it is unstable, like all physical phenomena; (3) it is dependent on space and time; its speed is 186,000 miles per second, and there are stars whose light takes thousands of years before it reaches the earth. The perfect Light of God is free from any such defects.

2998. The first three points in the Parable centre round the symbols of the Niche, the Lamp, and the Glass. (1) The Niche (*Mishkāt*) is the little shallow recess in the wall of an Eastern house, fairly high from the ground, in which a light (before the days of electricity) was usually placed. Its height enabled it to diffuse the light in the room and minimised the shadows. The background of the wall and the sides of the niche helped to throw the light well into the room, and if the wall was whitewashed, it also acted as a reflector: the opening in front made the way for the light. So with the spiritual Light: it is placed high, above worldly things; it has a niche or habitation of its own, in Revelation and other Signs of God; its access to men is by a special Way, open to all, yet closed to those who refuse its rays. (2) The Lamp is the core of the spiritual Truth, which is the real illumination; the Niche is nothing without it; the Niche is actually made for it. (3) The Glass is the transparent medium through which the Light passes. On the one hand, it protects the light from moths and other forms of low life (lower motives in man) and from gusts of wind (passions), and on the other, it transmits the light through a medium which is made up of and akin to the grosser substances of the earth (such as sand, soda, potash, etc.), so arranged as to admit the subtle to the gross by its transparency. So the spiritual Truth has to be filtered through human language or human intelligence to make it intelligible to mankind.

The glass as it were  
 A brilliant star :<sup>2999</sup>  
 Lit from a blessed Tree,<sup>3000</sup>  
 An Olive, neither of the East  
 Nor of the West,<sup>3001</sup>  
 Whose Oil is well-nigh  
 Luminous,  
 Though fire scarce touched it :<sup>3002</sup>  
 Light upon Light !  
 God doth guide  
 Whom He will  
 To His Light :<sup>3003</sup>  
 God doth set forth Parables  
 For men : and God  
 Doth know all things.

36. (Lit is such a Light)<sup>3004</sup>  
 In houses, which God  
 Hath permitted to be raised<sup>3005</sup>  
 To honour ; for the celebration,

الرَّجَاجَةُ كَأَنَّهَا كَوْكَبٌ دُرِّيٌّ  
 يُوقَدُ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ مُبَارَكَةٍ زَيْتُونَةٍ لَا  
 شَرْقِيَّةٍ  
 وَلَا غَرْبِيَّةٍ يَكَادُ زَيْتُهَا يُضِيءُ  
 وَلَوْ كُنَّ سَنَسَةٌ نَارًا  
 تَوْرُ عَلَى نُورٍ يَهْدِي اللَّهُ لِنُورِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ  
 وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ  
 وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ  
 ٣٦- فِي بُيُوتِ أَذْنِ اللَّهِ  
 أَنْ تُرْفَعَ وَيُذْكَرَ

2999. The glass by itself does not shine. But when the light comes into it, it shines like a brilliant star. So men of God, who preach God's Truth, are themselves illuminated by God's Light and become the illuminating media through which that Light spreads and permeates human life.

3000. The olive tree is not a very impressive tree in its outward appearance. Its leaves have a dull greenish-brown colour, and in size it is inconspicuous. But its oil is used in sacred ceremonies and forms a wholesome ingredient of food. The fruit has a specially fine flavour. Cf. n. 2880 to xxiii. 20. For the illuminating quality of its oil, see n. 3002 below.

3001. This mystic Olive is not localised. It is neither of the East nor of the West. It is universal, for such is God's Light. As applied to the olive, there is also a more literal meaning, which can be allegorised in a different way. An olive tree with an eastern aspect gets only the rays of the morning sun; one with a western aspect, only the rays of the western sun. In the northern hemisphere the south aspect will give the sun's rays a great part of the day, while a north aspect will shut them out altogether, and *vice versa* in the southern hemisphere. But a tree in the open plain or on a hill will get perpetual sunshine by day : it will be more mature, and the fruit and oil will be of superior quality. So God's light is not localised or immature : it is perfect and universal.

3002. Pure olive oil is beautiful in colour, consistency, and illuminating power. The world has tried all kinds of illuminants, and for economic reasons or convenience, one replaces another. But for coolness, comfort to the eyes, and steadiness, vegetable oils are superior to electricity, mineral oils, and animal oils. And among vegetable oils, olive oil takes a high place and deserves its sacred associations. Its purity is almost like light itself : you may suppose it to be almost light before it is lit. So with spiritual Truth : it illuminates the mind and understanding imperceptibly, almost before the human mind and heart have been consciously touched by it.

3003. Glorious, illimitable Light, which cannot be described or measured. And there are grades and grades of it, passing transcendently into regions of spiritual height, which man's imagination can scarcely conceive of. The topmost pinnacle is the true prototypal Light, the real Light, of which all others were reflections, the Light of God. Hence the saying of the holy Prophet about God's "Seventy thousand veils of Light".

3004. The punctuation of the Arabic text makes it necessary to carry back the adverbial clause "in houses", to something in the last verse, say "Lit from a blessed Tree",—the intervening clauses being treated as parenthetical.

3005. That is, in all places of pure worship ; but some Commentators understand special Mosques, such as the Ka'ba in Mecca, or the Mosques in Medina or Jerusalem ; for these are specially held in honour.

In them, of His name :  
In them is He glorified  
In the mornings and  
In the evenings, (again and  
again),—<sup>3006</sup>

فِيهَا اسْمُهُ يُسْتَمَدُّ فِيهَا  
بِالْعُدُوِّ وَالْأَصَالِ ۝

37. By men whom neither  
Traffic nor merchandise  
Can divert from the Remembrance<sup>3007</sup>  
Of God, nor from regular Prayer,  
Nor from the practice  
Of regular Charity :  
Their (only) fear is  
For the Day when  
Hearts and eyes  
Will be transformed<sup>3008</sup>  
(In a world wholly new),—

۞- بِمَنْ لَا تَلْبِيهِمْ تِجَارَةٌ وَلَا بَيْعٌ  
عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَإِقَامِ الصَّلَاةِ  
وَالْإِيتَاءِ الزَّكَاةِ ۝  
يَخَافُونَ يَوْمًا تَتَقَلَّبُ  
فِيهِ الْقُلُوبُ وَالْأَبْصَارُ ۝

38. That God may reward them  
According to the best<sup>3009</sup>  
Of their deeds, and add  
Even more for them  
Out of His Grace :  
For God doth provide  
For those whom He will,  
Without measure.

۞- لِيَجْزِيَ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنَ مَا عَمِلُوا  
وَيَزِيدَ هُمْ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ  
وَاللَّهُ يَزِدُّ مَنْ يُشَاءُ  
بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ ۝

39. But the Unbelievers,—  
Their deeds are like a mirage<sup>3010</sup>

۞- وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَعْمَالُهُمْ كَسَرَابٍ

3006. *In the evenings*: the Arabic word is *ʿāṣi*, a plural of a plural, to imply emphasis: I have rendered that shade of meaning by adding the words "again and again".

3007. "Remembrance of God" is wider than Prayer: it includes silent contemplation, and active service of God and His creatures. The regular Prayers and regular Charity are the social acts performed through the organised community.

3008. Some renderings suggest the effects of terror on the Day of Judgment. But here we are considering the case of the righteous, whose "fear" of God is akin to love and reverence and who (as the next verse shows) hope for the best reward from God. But the world they will meet will be a wholly changed world.

3009. The best of the righteous do not deserve the reward that they get: all their faults are forgiven, and only their best actions are considered in the reward that they get. Nay, more! Out of the unbounded Grace of God, even more is added to them. For in giving rewards, God's bounty is boundless.

3010. We have had various metaphors to give us an idea of the beneficent Light of God in the spiritual world. Now we have contrasted metaphors to enable us to see those who deny or refuse that Light, and are overwhelmed in utter darkness. The Light (of God) is an absolute Reality, and is mentioned first, and the souls that follow that Light are a reflected reality and are mentioned after the Light. On the other hand the Darkness is not a reality in itself, but a negation of reality; the reflected existences that refuse the Light are mentioned, and then their state, which is Unreality. Two metaphors are given: a mirage, in this verse, and the depths of darkness in the sea, in the next.



In sandy deserts, which  
The man parched with thirst  
Mistakes for water; until  
When he comes up to it,  
He finds it to be nothing :<sup>3011</sup>  
But he finds God<sup>3012</sup>  
(Ever) with him, and God  
Will pay him his account :  
And God is swift  
In taking account.

بِقَيْعَةِ يَنْصَبُهُ الظَّنَانُ مَاءً  
حَتَّى إِذَا جَاءَهُ لَمْ يَجِدْهُ شَيْئًا  
وَوَجَدَ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ  
فَوَقَّاهُ حِسَابُهُ  
وَاللَّهُ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ ۝

40. Or (the Unbelievers' state)  
Is like the depths of darkness  
In a vast deep ocean,  
Overwhelmed with billow  
Topped by billow,  
Topped by (dark) clouds :<sup>3013</sup>  
Depths of darkness, one<sup>3014</sup>  
Above another : if a man  
Stretches out his hand,  
He can hardly see it !  
For any to whom God  
Giveth not light,  
There is no light !<sup>3015</sup>

م- أَوْ كَظُلُمَاتٍ فِي بَحْرٍ  
بُحْتٍ يَغْشَاهُ مَوْجٌ مِنْ فَوْقِهِ  
مَوْجٌ مِنْ فَوْقِهِ سَكَابُكٌ  
ظُلُمَاتٍ بَعْضُهُمَا فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ  
إِذَا أَخْرَجَ يَدَهُ لَمْ يَكُنْ يَرَاهَا  
وَمَنْ لَمْ يَجْعَلِ اللَّهُ لَهُ نُورًا  
فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ نُورٍ ۝

#### SECTION 6.

41. Seest thou not that it is  
God Whose praises all beings  
In the heavens and on earth<sup>3016</sup>  
Do celebrate, and the birds

م- أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يُسَبِّحُ  
لَهُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالظُّلُمُ

3011. The mirage, of which I have seen several instances in the Arabian deserts and in Egypt, is a strange phenomenon of illusion. It is a trick of our vision. In the language of our Parable, it rejects the Light which shows us the Truth, and deceives us with Falsehood. A lonely traveller in a desert, nearly dying of thirst, sees a broad sheet of water. He goes in that direction, lured on and on, but finds nothing at all. He dies in protracted agony.

3012. The rebel against God finds himself like the man deluded by a mirage. The Truth which he rejected is always with him. The mirage which he accepted leads to his destruction.

3013. What a graphic picture of darkness in the depths of the Ocean, wave upon wave, and on top of all, dense dark clouds! There is so little light even in ordinary depths of the Ocean that fishes which live there lose their eyes as useless organs. For lines 4-5 I am indebted to Gairdner's Translation of Gazālī's *Mishkāt*.

3014. A contrast to "Light upon Light" in xxiv. 35 above.

3015. The true source of Light in the world of Reality is God, and anyone who cuts himself off from that Light is in utter darkness indeed, for it is the negation of the only true Light, and not merely relative darkness, like that which we see, say, in the shadows of moonlight.

3016. Cf. xxi. 20.

(Of the air) with wings<sup>3017</sup>  
 Outspread? Each one knows  
 Its own (mode of) prayer  
 And praise. And God  
 Knows well all that they do.

صَفَّتْ كُلُّ قَدِّعْلَمَ صَلَاتَهُ وَتَسْبِيحَهُ  
 اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ بِمَا يَفْعَلُونَ ○

42. Yea, to God belongs  
 The dominion of the heavens  
 And the earth; and to God  
 Is the final goal (of all).<sup>3018</sup>

۞-۴۲- وَ لِلَّهِ مُلْكُ السَّمَوَاتِ  
 وَ الْأَرْضِ ۞ وَ إِلَى اللَّهِ الْمَصِيرُ ○

43. Seest thou not that God  
 Makes the clouds move  
 Gently, then joins them  
 Together, then makes them  
 Into a heap?—then wilt thou  
 See rain issue forth<sup>3019</sup>  
 From their midst. And He  
 Sends down from the sky  
 Mountain masses (of clouds)  
 Wherein is hail: He strikes  
 Therewith whom He pleases  
 And He turns it away  
 From whom He pleases.  
 The vivid flash of His lightning  
 Well-nigh blinds the sight.

۴۳- أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يُزَيِّجُ سَحَابًا  
 ثُمَّ يُؤَلِّفُ بَيْنَهُ  
 ثُمَّ يَجْعَلُهُ رُكَامًا  
 فَتَرَى الْوَدْقَ يَخْرُجُ مِنْ خِلَالِهِ وَيُنْزِلُ  
 مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ جِبَالٍ فِيهَا مِنْ بَرَدٍ  
 فَيُصِيبُ بِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ  
 وَيَصْرِفُهُ عَنِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ  
 يَكَاذِبُنَا بِرَقِّهِ يَدُ هَبٍ بِأَلْبَصَارٍ  
 ۴۴- يَقُولُ اللَّهُ الْبَلِّ وَ الْتَهَارُ ○

44. It is God Who alternates<sup>3020</sup>  
 The Night and the Day:

3017. All denizens of the heavens, such as angels, all denizens of the earth (including waters) such as man, animals, insects, fishes, etc., and all denizens of the air, such as birds, celebrate the praises of God. Each has his own mode of prayer and praise. It is not necessarily with words, for language (as we know it) is peculiar to man. But actions and other modes of self-expression recognise and declare the glory of God.

3018. From Him we are; to Him we belong; and to Him we shall return. Not only we, but all Creation, proclaims this in the whole world.

3019. Artists, or lovers of nature, or observers of clouds will appreciate this description of cloud effects—thin clouds floating about in fantastic shapes, joining together and taking body and substance, then emerging as heavy clouds heaped up, which condense and pour forth their rain. Then the heavy dark clouds in the upper regions, that bring hail,—how distinct and yet how similar! They are truly like mountain masses! And when the hailstones fall, how local their area! It hits some localities and leaves free others almost interlaced! And the lightning—how blinding flashes come from thunderous clouds! In this Book of Nature can we not see the hand of the powerful and beneficent God?

3020. His power, wisdom, and goodness are shown no less in the regular phenomena of nature like the succession of Day and Night, than in the seasonal or seemingly irregular movements of clouds and rain and hail and lightning. Those who have the spiritual vision can read this Book of God with delight and instruction.

Verily in these things  
Is an instructive example  
For those who have vision !

45. And God has created  
Every animal from water :<sup>3021</sup>  
Of them there are some  
That creep on their bellies ;  
Some that walk on two legs ;  
And some that walk on four.<sup>3022</sup>  
God creates what He wills ;<sup>3023</sup>  
For verily God has power  
Over all things.

46. We have indeed sent down  
Signs that make things manifest :  
And God guides whom He wills  
To a Way that is straight.

47. They<sup>3024</sup> say, " We believe  
In God and in the Apostle,  
And we obey " : but  
Even after that, some of them  
Turn away : they are not  
(Really) Believers.

48. When they are summoned  
To God and His Apostle,  
In order that he may judge  
Between them, behold, some  
Of them decline (to come).

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَعِبْرَةً لِّأُولِي الْأَبْصَارِ ۝

۴۵- وَاللَّهُ خَلَقَ كُلَّ دَابَّةٍ مِنْ مَّاءٍ ۚ  
فَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يَمْشِي عَلَى بَطْنِهِ ۚ  
وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يَمْشِي عَلَى رِجْلَيْنِ وَمِنْهُمْ  
مَنْ يَمْشِي عَلَى أَرْبَعٍ يَخْلُقُ اللَّهُ مَا يَشَاءُ  
إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ۝

۴۶- لَقَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا آيَاتٍ مُبَيِّنَاتٍ وَاللَّهُ  
يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ۝

۴۷- وَيَقُولُونَ آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَبِالرَّسُولِ  
وَإِنَّا نَحْنُ مُوقِنُونَ ۖ قُلْ فَمَنْ يَمْلِكُ  
ذَلِكَ وَمَا أُولَئِكَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ ۝

۴۸- وَإِذَا دُعُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ  
لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَهُمْ إِذَا فَرِيقٌ مِنْهُمْ  
مُنْعَرِضُونَ ۝

3021. Cf. xxi. 30, n. 2691. Protoplasm is the basis of all living matter, and "the vital power of protoplasm seems to depend on the constant presence of water" (Lowson's Text-book of Botany, Indian Edition, London 1922, p. 23). Text books on Zoology are also clear on the point. For example, see T. J. Parker and W. A. Haswell, Text-book of Zoology, London 1910, vol. I, p. 15: "Living protoplasm always contains a large amount of water."

3022. The creeping things include worms and lowly forms of animal life as well as reptiles (like snakes), centipedes, spiders, and insects. Where these have legs, they are small, and the description of creeping or crawling is more applicable to them than that of walking. Fishes and sea-animals generally cannot be said to walk: their swimming is like "creeping on their bellies". Two-legged animals include birds and man. Most of the mammals walk on four legs. This includes the whole of the animal world.

3023. In God's Will and Plan, the variety of forms and habits among animals is adapted to their various modes of life and stages of biological evolution.

3024. The Hypocrites, far from profiting from God's Light and Revelation, or declaring their open hostility, play fast and loose according to their selfish worldly aims.

49. But if the right is <sup>3025</sup>  
On their side, they come  
To him with all submission

50. Is it that there is  
A disease in their hearts ?  
Or do they doubt,  
Or are they in fear,  
That God and His Apostle  
Will deal unjustly with them ?  
Nay, it is they themselves  
Who do wrong. <sup>3026</sup>

### SECTION 7.

51. ~~The~~ The answer of the Believers,  
When summoned to God  
And His Apostle, in order  
That he may judge between them,  
Is no other than this :  
They say, " We hear and we  
obey " <sup>3027</sup>

It is such as these  
That will attain felicity. <sup>3028</sup>

52. It is such as obey  
God and His Apostle,  
And fear God and do  
Right, that will win  
(In the end).

53. They swear their strongest oaths  
By God that, if only thou

۴۹- وَإِنْ يَكُنْ لَهُمُ الْحَقُّ  
يَأْتُوا إِلَيْهِ مُذْعِنِينَ ۝

۵۰- إِنْ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ كُرْهُ

أَمْ أَرْثَابُوا أَمْ يَخَافُونَ

أَنْ يَحْجِيفَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَرَسُولُهُ

بَلْ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ۝

۵۱- إِنْ شَاءَ كَانَ قَوْلَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذَا دُعُوا

إِلَى اللَّهِ

وَرَسُولِهِ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَهُمْ

أَنْ يَقُولُوا سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا

وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ۝

۵۲- وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ

وَيَخْشِ اللَّهَ وَيَتَّقْهُ

فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَائِزُونَ ۝

۵۳- وَأَقْسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ جَهْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ لَئِنْ

<sup>3025</sup> The Hypocrites only wanted to go to the judge who they thought was likely to give judgment in their favour. If their case was incontestable, and justice was on their side, they readily came to the Apostle, knowing that he was just and would judge in their favour, even against his own adherents. But if they had done wrong, an impartial judge was not to their taste. They would rather go to some one who would tip the balance in their favour! This form of selfishness and iniquity was not confined to the Hypocrites of Medina. It is common in all ages, and should be suppressed.

<sup>3026</sup> The real fact is that their conscience smites them. They know their own iniquity, and do not wish to go before a just judge who would be open to no influence and would be sure to give a righteous decree.

<sup>3027</sup> Cf. ii. 285. Contrast with it the attitude of the Unbelievers or Hypocrites, who say aloud, " we hear ", but intend in their hearts to disobey (ii. 93).

<sup>3028</sup> True happiness, whether here or in the Hereafter, is not to be attained by fraud or duplicity: it is the privilege of those who listen attentively to good counsel and carry it out in their lives.

Wouldst command them, they  
Would leave (their homes).<sup>3029</sup>  
Say : "Swear ye not ;  
Obedience is (more) reasonable ;  
Verily, God is well acquainted  
With all that ye do."

54. Say : " Obey God, and obey  
His Apostle : but if ye turn  
Away, he is only responsible  
For the duty placed on him  
And ye for that placed  
On you. If ye obey him,  
Ye shall be on right guidance.  
The Apostle's duty is only  
To preach the clear (Message).<sup>3030</sup>

55. God has promised, to those  
Among you who believe  
And work righteous deeds, that  
He<sup>3031</sup>  
Will, of a surety, grant them  
In the land, inheritance  
(Of power), as He granted it  
To those before them ; that  
He will establish in authority  
Their religion—the one  
Which He has chosen for them ;  
And that He will change<sup>3032</sup>  
(Their state), after the fear  
In which they {lived}, to one

أَمْرُهُمْ لِيَعْرِجْنَ  
قُلْ لَا تَقْسِمُوا طَاعَةً مَعْرُوضَةً  
إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

٥٤- قُلْ أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ  
فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْهِ مَا حُمِّلَ  
وَعَلَيْكُمْ مَا حُمِّلْتُمْ  
وَإِنْ تُطِيعُوهُ تَهْتَدُوا وَمَا عَلَى الرَّسُولِ  
إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ

٥٥- وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ  
لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ  
كَمَا اسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ  
وَلَيُمَكِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ  
دِينَهُمُ الَّذِي ارْتَضَى لَهُمْ  
وَلَيَكْبِدَنَّ لَهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ خَوْفَهُمْ

3029. Some people, especially hypocrites, give hyperbolic assurances, as did the Medina Hypocrites to the holy Apostle, that they would do any bidding, even to the forsaking of their hearths and homes. To this they are ready to swear their strongest oaths, which mean nothing. They are asked to spare their oaths, and quietly do at least such unheroic duties as they are asked to do in every-day life. Idle words are not of the least value. God will judge by your actions, and He knows all, whether it is open or secret.

3030. 'If you disobey God's commands as explained by His Apostle, you are not going to be forced. The Apostle's mission is to train your will and explain clearly all the implications of your conduct. The responsibility for your conduct rests entirely on yourselves.'

3031. Three things are promised here, to those who have Faith and obey God's Law : (1) that they will inherit power and authority in the land, not for any selfish purposes of theirs nor by way of favouritism, but in order that they may maintain God's Law ; (2) that the Religion of Right, which God has chosen for them, will be openly established, and will suppress all wrong and oppression ; (3) that the righteous will live in peace and security, instead of having to suffer persecution, or leave their hearths and homes for the cause of God, or practise the rites of their Faith in secret.

3032. If this verse was revealed about the time of the Battle of the Ditch (*Khandaq*), also called the Battle of the Confederates (*Aḥzāb*), A.H. 4-5, we can imagine the comfort it gave to the Muslims who were besieged in Medina by a force ten times their number. The Muslims then lived in a state of great suspense and danger, and under arms for days on end. (See xxxiii. 9-20). The security and authority they were promised came to them subsequently in abundant measure.

Of security and peace :  
 'They will worship Me (alone)  
 And not associate aught with Me.'  
 If any do reject Faith  
 After this, they are  
 Rebellious and wicked.

56. So establish regular Prayer  
 And give regular Charity;  
 And obey the Apostle;  
 That ye may receive mercy.

57. Never think thou  
 That the Unbelievers  
 Ate going to frustrate  
 (God's Plan) on earth:  
 Their abode is the Fire,—  
 And it is indeed  
 An evil refuge !

لَمَّا يَعْبُدُونَنِي لَا يُشْرِكُونَ بِي شَيْئًا  
 وَمَنْ كَفَرَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ  
 فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ

هـ وَأَقِمُّوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ  
 وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ

هـ لَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا  
 مُعْجِزِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ  
 وَمَا لَهُمْ فِي النَّارِ  
 وَلَا يَشْنُ الْمَصِيرُ

C. 160.—For a self-respecting life on earth, respect  
 (xxiv, 58-64.) For others' privacy is most essential,  
 In the home and abroad: but superstitions  
 Are not meet in intercourse amongst kin  
 Or true friends. In public council never  
 Fail to observe the most punctilious  
 Form and order: your self-respect  
 Demands that ye should give your Leader  
 Sincere respect and all obedience.  
 Ye may not know but God doth know  
 The inwardness of things both great and small.

### SECTION 8.

58. ② ye who believe!<sup>3033</sup>  
 Let those whom your right  
 hands<sup>3034</sup> among  
 Possess, and the (children) among  
 you

هـ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اسْتَأْذِنُوا  
 الَّذِينَ مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ

3033. We now come to rules of decorum within the family circle in refined society. Servants and children have rather more freedom of access, as they come and go at all hours, and there is less ceremony with them. But even in their case there are limitations. During the night, before morning prayer, i.e., before dawn, they must discreetly ask for permission before they enter, partly because they must not unnecessarily disturb people asleep, and partly because the people are then undressed. The same applies to the time for the midday siesta, and again to the time after night prayers, when people usually undress and turn in to sleep. For grown-ups the rule is stricter: they must ask permission to come in at all times (xxiv, 59).

3034. This would mean slaves in a régime of slavery. But the principle applies to all personal servants, who have to render personal service to their masters or mistresses by day and by night.

Who have not come of age<sup>3035</sup>,  
 Ask your permission (before  
 They come to your presence),  
 On three occasions: before  
 Morning prayer; the while  
 Ye doff your clothes  
 For the noonday heat;  
 And after the late-night prayer:  
 These are your three times<sup>3036</sup>  
 Of undress: outside those times  
 It is not wrong for you  
 Or for them to move about  
 Attending to each other:  
 Thus does God make clear.  
 The Signs to you: for God  
 Is full of knowledge and wisdom.

59. But when the children among  
 you<sup>3037</sup>  
 Come of age, let them (also)  
 Ask for permission, as do those  
 Senior to them (in age):<sup>3038</sup>  
 Thus does God make clear  
 His Signs to you: for God  
 Is full of knowledge and wisdom.<sup>3039</sup>

60. Such elderly women<sup>3040</sup> as are  
 Past the prospect of marriage,—  
 There is no blame on them  
 If they lay aside

لَمْ يَبْلُغُوا الْحُلُمَ مِنْكُمْ تِلْكَ مَرَاتِبٌ  
 مِنْ قَبْلِ صَلَوةِ الْفَجْرِ وَحِينَ تَضَعُونَ  
 ثِيَابَكُمْ مِنَ الظَّهِيرَةِ وَمِنْ بَعْدِ صَلَوةِ  
 الْعِشَاءِ تِلْكَ عَوْرَتُكُمْ لَكُمْ  
 لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَا عَلَيْهِمْ جُنَاحٌ بَعْدَ هُنَّ  
 طَوَّفْتُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ بَعْضُكُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ  
 كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ الْآيَاتِ  
 وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ٥٩

٥٩- وَإِذَا بَلَغَ الْأَطْفَالُ مِنْكُمُ الْحُلُمَ  
 فَلْيَسْتَأْذِنُوا كَمَا اسْتَأْذَنَ الَّذِينَ  
 مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ  
 وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ٦٠

٦٠- وَالْقَوَاعِدُ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ الَّتِي لَا يَرْجُونَ  
 بَحَاً فَلَيْسَ عَلَيْهِمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ يَضَعْنَ

3035. I have translated "come of age" euphemistically for "attain the age of puberty".

3036. It is a mark of refinement for ladies and gentlemen not to be slipshod or vulgarly familiar, in dress, manners, or speech; and Islam aims at making every Muslim man or woman, however humble in station, a refined gentleman or lady, so that he or she can climb the ladder of spiritual development with humble confidence in God, and, with the co-operation of his brothers and sisters in Islam. The principles here laid down, apply, if they are interpreted with due elasticity, even if social and domestic habits change, with changes in climate or in racial and personal habits. Punctilious self-respect and respect for others, in small things as well as great, are the key-notes in these simple rules of etiquette.

3037. *Children among you*: i.e., in your house, not necessarily your own children. All in the house, including the stranger within your gate, must conform to these wholesome rules.

3038. *Those senior to them*: literally, those before them, i.e., those who have already become grown-up before these children attain their age. It is suggested that each generation as it grows up should follow the wholesome traditions of its predecessors. While they were children, they behaved like children: when they grow up, they must behave like grown-ups.

3039. The refrain connects up this verse with the last verse, whose meaning is completed here. The slight variation ("His Signs" here, against "the Signs" there) shows that this verse is more personal, as referring to children who have now become responsible men and women.

3040. For elderly women: in the home the rules of dress and decorum are not so exacting as for younger women, but they are also enjoined to study modesty, both because it is good in itself, and as an example to the younger people.

Their (outer) garments, provided  
They make not a wanton display  
Of their beauty: but  
It is best for them  
To be modest: and God  
Is One Who sees and knows<sup>3041</sup>  
All things.

61. It is no fault in the blind  
Nor in one born lame, nor  
In one afflicted with illness,<sup>3042</sup>  
Nor in yourselves, that ye  
Should eat in your own houses,  
Or those of your fathers,  
Or your mothers, or your brothers,  
Or your sisters, or your father's  
brothers,  
Or your father's sisters,  
Or your mother's brothers,  
Or your mother's sisters,  
Or in houses of which  
The keys are in your possession,  
Or in the house of a sincere  
Friend of yours: there is  
No blame on you, whether  
Ye eat in company or  
Separately. But if ye  
Enter houses, salute each other—  
A greeting of blessing  
And purity as from God.<sup>3043</sup>

ثِيَابَهُنَّ غَيْرَ مُتَبَرِّجَاتٍ بِزِينَةٍ  
وَأَنْ يَسْتَغْفِنَ عَنْهُنَّ خَيْرٌ لَّهُنَّ  
وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

لَيْسَ عَلَى الْأَعْمَى حَرَجٌ وَلَا عَلَى  
الْمَرْصُومِ حَرَجٌ وَلَا عَلَى الْمَرِيضِ حَرَجٌ وَلَا  
عَلَى أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَنْ تَأْكُلُوا مِنْ بُيُوتِكُمْ أَوْ  
بُيُوتِ آبَائِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ إِهْوَانِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ  
إِخْوَانِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ أَخَوَاتِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ أَعْمَامِكُمْ  
أَوْ بُيُوتِ عَمَّاتِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ إِخْوَالِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ  
خَالَاتِكُمْ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتُمْ مِنْ فَاكِهَةٍ أَوْ مِنْ حِلٍّ  
لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ  
أَنْ تَأْكُلُوا جَمِيعًا أَوْ أَشْتَاتًا  
فَإِذَا دَخَلْتُمْ بُيُوتًا فَسَلِّمُوا عَلَى أَنْفُسِكُمْ  
تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْكِتَابِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

3041. Another example of a refrain: see n. 3039 above. Verses 58 and 59 were closer connected: their refrain was practically identical. This verse, though ancillary, is less closely connected: its refrain comes in like a half-note in a melody.

3042. There were various Arab superstitions and fancies which are combated and rejected here. (1) The blind, or the halt, or those afflicted with serious disease were supposed to be objects of divine displeasure, and as such not fit to be associated with us in meals in our houses: we are not to entertain such a thought, as we are no judges of the causes of people's misfortunes, which deserve our sympathy and kindness. (2) It was considered unbecoming to take meals in the houses of near relatives: this taboo is not approved. (3) A similar superstition about houses in our possession but not in our actual occupation is disapproved. (4) If people think they should not fall under obligation to casual friends, that does not apply to a sincere friend, in whose company a meal is not to be rejected, but welcomed. (5) If people make a superstition either that they should always eat separately, as in a *Chauka* in India, or that they must always eat in company, as some people weary of their own company think, either of them is wrong. Man is free and should regulate his life according to needs and circumstances.

3043. The shades of meaning in *Salām* are explained in n. 2512 to xix. 62. Here, we were first told that we might accept hospitality and good fellowship in each other's houses. Now we are told what spirit should animate us in doing so. It should not be a spirit only of self-satisfaction in a worldly sense. It should rather be a spirit of good-will in the highest spiritual sense of the term—purity of motives and purity of life, as in the sight of God. Cf. Dante in the *Paradiso* (iii. 85); "In His will is our Peace."



Thus does God make clear  
The Signs to you: that ye  
May understand.<sup>3044</sup>

## SECTION 9.

62. Only those are Believers,  
Who believe in God and  
His Apostle: when they are  
With him on a matter  
Requiring collective action,<sup>3045</sup>  
They do not depart until  
They have asked for his leave;  
Those who ask for thy leave  
Are those who believe in God  
And His Apostle; so when  
They ask for thy leave,  
For some business of theirs,  
Give leave to those of them  
Whom thou wilt,<sup>3046</sup> and ask  
God for their forgiveness:<sup>3047</sup>  
For God is Oft-Forgiving,  
Most Merciful.

63. Deem not the summons  
Of the Apostle among yourselves  
Like the summons of one<sup>3048</sup>  
Of you to another: God  
Deth know those of you  
Who slip away under shelter  
Of some excuse: then  
Let those beware who

كَلِمَاتٍ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ  
الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ٥

٦٢- اِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ اٰمَنُوا بِاللّٰهِ  
وَرَسُولِهِ وَاِذَا كَانُوْا مَعًا عَلٰى اَمْرٍ جَامِعٍ  
لَّمْ يَذْهَبُوْا حَتّٰى يَسْتَاْذِنُوْهُ  
اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَسْتَاْذِنُوْنَكَ  
اُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُولِهِ  
فَاِذَا اسْتَاْذَنُوْكَ لِبَعْضِ شَاْئِهِمْ  
فَاَذْنِ لِمَنْ يَشِئْتَ مِنْهُمْ وَاَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ  
اللّٰهُ  
اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ٥

٦٣- لَا تَجْعَلُوْا دَعَاةَ الرَّسُوْلِ بَيْنَكُمْ  
كَدَعَاةِ بَعْضِكُمْ بَعْضًا  
فَدَّيْعَلُ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ يَسْتَسْلُوْنَ مِنْكُمْ  
اِذَا قُلِيْعِدَ بِالَّذِيْنَ

3044. See notes 3039 and 3041 above. The refrain comes again, in a different form, closing the argument from a different point of view.

3045. *Matter requiring collective action*: anything that affects the Community as a whole: Jum'a and 'Id prayers are periodical occasions of this kind, but what is meant here is, I think, joint consultations with a view to joint undertakings, such as a Jihad, or some kind of organisation in peace.

3046. That is, those to whom, in the exercise of your impartial discretion, you think it expedient to give leave. "Will", unless the context shows otherwise, means "right will", not a will without any definite principle behind it

3047. In important matters of general consultation, even though leave of absence is given on sufficient excuse, it implies some defect in duty on the part of the person to whom the leave is given, and therefore the need of forgiveness from Him to Whom we owe duty in a perfect measure.

3048. Three significations are possible. One is that adopted in the Translation, which agrees with the view of most Commentators. Another would be: 'Do not think that the prayer of the Apostle to God is like your ordinary requests to another: the Apostle's prayer will be about serious matters and will be accepted by God.' A third interpretation would be: 'Do not address the Apostle familiarly as you would address one another; use proper terms of respect for him.'

Withstand the Apostle's order,  
Lest some trial befall them,<sup>3049</sup>  
Or a grievous Penalty  
Be inflicted on them.

64. Be quite sure that  
To God doth belong  
Whatever is in the heavens  
And on earth Well doth He  
Know what ye are intent upon;<sup>3050</sup>  
And one day they will be  
Brought back to Him, and He  
Will tell them the truth  
Of what they did.<sup>3051</sup>  
For God doth know  
All things.

يُخَالِفُونَ عَنْ أَمْرِهِ أَنْ تُصِيبَهُمْ فِتْنَةٌ  
أَوْ يُصِيبَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ٥

٦٣-الْكَرَامَاتُ لِلَّهِ  
مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ  
قَدْ يَعْلَمُ مَا أَنْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ  
وَيَوْمَ يُرْجَعُونَ إِلَيْهِ فَيُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا عَمِلُوا  
وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ٥



3049 The trial is understood to be some misfortune in this life and the "grievous Penalty to be the punishment in the Hereafter

3050 The condition or position you are in, the motives which actuate you, and the ends you have in view

3051. Things misunderstood or maligned, falsely praised or held in honour or fraudulently shown to be good when they are evil—everything will be revealed in its true light on the Day of final Judgment

## APPENDIX VIII.

## Mystic Interpretation of the Verse of Light (xxiv. 35).

Among the beauties of the Qur-ān, not the least is that which sends its mystic interpreters into ecstasies of spiritual delight. While its plain meaning contains noble precepts of ordinary conduct, its mystic passages reveal spiritual mysteries which can only be expressed by the phrase "Light upon Light!" (xxiv. 35). It is an endless chain of illumination in which ordinary knowledge dissolves as if it were ignorance.

The highest place among the mystic interpreters should be assigned to Imām Ḡazālī, whose *Mishkāt-ul-Anwār* deals with the verse of Light (xxiv. 35), the contrasted verse of Darkness (xxiv. 40), and the saying of the holy Prophet quoted by him from the Ḥadīth: "God has Seventy Thousand Veils of Light and Darkness: were He to withdraw their curtain, then would the splendours of His Aspect (or Countenance, or Face, *Wajh*) surely consume everyone who apprehended Him with his sight." In the *Mishkāt Sharḥ* (Bāb-ul-Masājid, end of section 2) Jibrīl says: "*Kāna bainī wa bainahū sab'ūna alfa ḥijābin min nūrīn*: Between me and Him are seventy thousand veils of Light."

English readers will thank me for drawing their attention to a meritorious English translation of Ḡazālī's interpretation of these sublime passages. It is in the Asiatic Society Monographs series, vol. xix: "Al-Ghazālī's *Mishkāt-ul-Anwār*, a Translation with Introduction, by W. H. T. Gairdner, published by the Royal Asiatic Society, London, 1924". They are asked to study this carefully, and better still (if they can), to study the original, and see for themselves how much spiritual wisdom is enshrined in just two verses of the holy Qur-ān, when interpreted by a learned Imām. And there are over 6,000 verses in the Qur-ān. In my Summary of Ḡazālī's argument I have used Gairdner's Translation throughout this Appendix.

Ḡazālī died in A.H. 505 (=1111 A.D.). He lived in an age when Greek philosophy and other philosophies had been studied by Muslims, many new arts and sciences had been added by them to the world's stock of knowledge, but the quest of the Timeless and the Universal was still urging thirsty enquirers on. It was his mission to expose the hollow pretensions of some superficial thinkers who pursued mirages. He turned Muslim thought in the direction of the subtler Realities of spiritual life. Within a century and a half of his death the Muslim world was engulfed in a mighty cataclysm which well-nigh wiped out its channels of culture and civilisation.

Now for Ḡazālī's argument.

If we take physical light as ordinarily understood, it is a phenomenon or appearance, and is therefore liable to pass away. For its illuminative power it has to depend upon the perceiving faculty or the perceiving instrument, the Eye. But

the Eye has many defects. It is only the perceiving faculty or Intelligence which is properly entitled to the name of Light considered as a source of enlightenment.

The verses of the Qur-ān, in relation to Intelligence, have the value of sunlight in relation to eyesight. The Qur-ān is therefore spoken of as the Light: "*For We have sent unto you a light (that is) manifest*": iv. 174.

Thus the physical eye sees by the sun; the spiritual eye sees by Revelation (the Qur-ān). There is a world invisible, with a Light of its own, quite different from the world visible, with its own physical light. The former, the spiritual world, is far above the physical world: not in space, for there is no question of space, but in grade. Yet the World of Sense is a type of the World of the Realm Celestial. All the Prophets are Lamps, and so are the Learned: but the difference between them is incalculable. If the Prophet of God is a Lamp Illuminant, that from which the Lamp is itself lit may fitly be symbolized by Fire. It is the Spirits Celestial, the angels, considered as the kindling-source of the Lamps Terrestrial, that can be compared alone with Fire: xxviii. 29. These Lamps Celestial have their own grades and orders, and the highest is the one nearest to the Ultimate Light.

That Ultimate Light is the final Fountain-head, Who is Light in and by Himself, not a light kindled from other lights. The term 'light' as applied to any other than this primary Light is purely metaphorical. But these metaphorical lights have various gradations. So are there gradations in their opposites. There is no darkness so intense as the darkness of Not-being. A dark thing is called "dark" simply because it cannot appear to anyone's vision; it never comes to exist for sight, though it may exist in itself. But that which has no existence for others *nor* for itself is assuredly the very extreme of darkness. In contrast with it is Being, which is therefore Light. Thus God Most High is the only Reality, as He is the only Light.

In the physical world Light is itself visible and makes other things visible. It lies behind all colour, and is apprehended with colour. Through its intense union with the colours, it may appear [under refraction] as colours and not as light at all. Its very intensity may cause its invisibility. So God is with all things, but some visions perceive Him not on account of His very brightness. [The absorption of some colours through the media through which they pass may result in the appearance of other colours. Some may consider it as a merit of the media. But it detracts from the appearance of the perfect colourless Light, which is the type for the perfection of God's Light.]

From the material world, the world of Sense, we rise through the world of Intelligence to the spiritual world, or the world of the Realm Supernal (or Celestial). This world of the Realm Supernal contains Light-substances, high and lofty, called "Angels", from which substances the various lights are effused upon the various mortal spirits.

The human soul has five faculties or spirits: (1) the sensory spirit which

takes in the information brought by the senses; (2) the imaginative spirit, which records the information conveyed by the senses and presents it to the intelligential spirit above it, when required; (3) the intelligential spirit, which apprehends ideas beyond the spheres of sense and imagination; these ideas are of universal application, and are symbolised by the particular things that are known by the senses; (4) the discursive [or ratiocinative] spirit, which takes the data of pure reason, combines them, and deduces from them abstract knowledge; (5) the transcendental prophetic spirit, which is possessed by prophets and some saints; by it the unseen tables and statutes of the Law are revealed from the other world, together with several of the sciences of the Realms Celestial and Terrestrial, and pre-eminently Theology, the science of Deity, which the intelligential and discursive spirits cannot compass. All of these are Lights, for it is through them that every kind of existing thing is manifested, including objects of sense or imagination.

These five faculties or spirits are symbolised by the Niche, Glass, Lamp, Tree, and Oil in the Verse of Light. The Niche is the sensory spirit, whose lights come through the eyes, ears, nostrils, etc. The Glass is the Imagination; for it is made out of opaque substances [like sand, soda, potash, etc.], but is clarified and refined till it becomes transparent to the light of a lamp, and it also keeps the lamp from being put out by a draught or violent jerking. So Imagination, though its origin is from the ideas of grosser substances, becomes clarified and transparent to ideas of intelligence and to the light from them, as well as serves to hold knowledge together and prevents it from being disturbed, unsettled, and dissipated. The Lamp is the intelligential spirit, which gives cognisance of divine ideas. The Tree is the ratiocinative spirit, which begins with a proposition, then branches into two, which become four, and so on. It leads to conclusions which in their turn become germs producing like conclusions, these latter being also susceptible of continuation, each with each. The Tree in the symbol is the Olive, which gives oil producing the most radiant illumination. So the ratiocinative spirit multiplies, establishes, and fixes all knowledge. Illumination can be infinitely multiplied; therefore a tree like the olive, whose oil can multiply light infinitely is entitled to be called "blessed" above other trees like fruit trees, whose fruit is consumed in use. Again, the ramifications of pure intelligential propositions do not admit of relation to direction or distance, and therefore the symbolical Tree may well be said to be "neither of the East nor of the West".

Finally, the Oil is the type of the transcendental prophetic spirit, which is absolutely luminous and clear. The thought-spirit is divided into that which needs to be instructed, advised, and supplied from without, if the acquisition of knowledge is to be continuous; while a portion of it is absolutely clear, as though it were self-luminous, and had no external source of supply. There are Saints whose light shines so bright that it is well-nigh independent of what the Angels supply. For the human soul there is a graded succession of Lights, and this explains the phrase "Light upon Light".

Now we come to the Darkness-verse (xxiv. 40). The man who has turned away from the path of guidance [light, truth],—he is false, he is darkness; nay,

he is darker than darkness. For darkness is neutral [or negative]; it leads one neither one way nor the other. But the minds of misbelievers, and the whole of their perceptions, are perverse, and support each other mutually in the actual deluding of their owners. That "vast deep ocean" is this world of mortal dangers, of evil chances, of blinding trouble. Wave upon wave of selfish passion darkens the man's soul. And the dark clouds above are rank beliefs and corrupt imaginings, which become so many veils veiling the misbeliever from the true faith, from knowledge of the Real, and from illumination by the sunlight of the Qur-an and human intelligence. As all our Lights have their source in the great Primary Light, the One Reality, there can be no light unless God gives the Light.

What is the meaning of the Prophet's saying that "God has Seventy Thousand Veils of Light and Darkness"? (*Inna lillāhi la-sab'ina alfa ḥijābin min nūrīn wa ḡulmatīn*). The number, 70,000, varies in different versions, and is not by way of definite enumeration, but rather to denote some indefinitely great quantity. There are three classes of men who are veiled from the ineffably glorious Light of God: (1) those veiled by Pure Darkness; (2) those veiled by mixed Light and Darkness; and (3) those veiled by Pure Light. In each class there are numerous sub-divisions. [When we take account of all these, we may well speak of 70,000 Veils.]

Those veiled by Pure Darkness are such as are atheists, or such as take something else, which is not God, for God. For example, they take Nature or Self for God. But there are numerous varieties of such men. One particularly mentioned by *Qazālī* is the sort of men that confess with their tongues the Creed of Islam, but are probably urged to it by fear alone, or the desire to beg from Muslims, or to curry favour with them, or to get financial [or other] assistance out of them, or, by a merely fanatical zeal, to support the opinions of their fathers. If the Creed fails to impel them to good works, it will not secure their elevation from the dark sphere to light. Rather are their patron-saints devils, who lead them from the light into the darkness. But he whom the Creed so touches that evil disgusts him and good gives him pleasure, has passed from pure darkness even though he be a great sinner still.

Those veiled by mixed Light and Darkness may be: (1) those veiled by the darkness of the Senses; they are above those who worship Self, but they give God's attributes of Majesty and Beauty to sense-perceived bodies, or to Nature or the forces of nature; (2) those veiled by some light, mixed with the darkness of the Imagination; they have got above the senses, but they allow their Imagination to govern their ideas of God, Who is above anything that the imagination of man can conceive; and (3) those veiled by some Light divine, mixed with the darkness of Intelligence; they fall into anthropomorphism in their ideas of God [and fail to perceive that the Soul is above the Intellect].

Those veiled by Pure Light are those who have perceived spiritual truths up to a certain point, but whose eyes have been so dazzled by the Light itself that there is a Veil between them and the Light. But these are only the Few of the Few whom "the splendours of the Countenance sublime consume", and the majesty of

the Divine Glory obliterates; so that they are themselves blotted out, annihilated. [That is the true meaning of the Buddha's *Nirvana*.] For self-contemplation there is no more a place, because with the self they have no longer anything to do. Nothing then remains save the One, the Real: that becomes the experience of the soul. That is the true meaning of Attainment or Salvation. And *Gazali* concludes with the words: "Hard, hard it is to essay the discovery of the Lights Supernal that are beyond the Veil." How true, and how appropriate for all who seek to interpret the Light! May God grant that their own feeble lights may not act as a veil between them and the Light Divine!

INTRODUCTION TO SŪRA XXV (*Furqān*).

This Sūra further develops the contrast between Light and Darkness, as symbolical of knowledge and ignorance, righteousness and sin, spiritual progress and degradation. It closes with a definition of the deeds by which the righteous are known in the environment of this world.

It is mainly an early Meccan Sūra, but its date has no significance.

*Summary.*

God's highest gift to man is that He has furnished a Criterion for judgment between right and wrong,—in His revelation, which teaches us the true significance of our eternal Future (xxv. 1–20, and C. 161).

Those who do not use that Criterion will be full of woe when the Judgment comes, for God gave full warning at all times (xxv. 21–44, and C. 162).

In the contrasts of shade and sun, night and day, death and life, and the whole ordering of God's Creation, men may learn of God Most Gracious; and the virtues of the righteous respond to God's care for them (xxv. 45–77, and C. 163).

C. 161.—Among the highest and greatest of the gifts of God  
 (xxv. 1-20.) Is His Revelation, which is the Criterion  
 By which we may judge between right  
 And wrong—between false and true worship,  
 Between the Message that comes from God  
 And the forgeries of men, between the Real  
 In our eternal Future and the Fancies  
 By which we are misled. The apostles of God  
 Come as men to live among men and guide them.



## Sūra XXV.

*Furqān*, or The Criterion.

*In the name of God, Most Gracious,  
Most Merciful.*

1. Blessed<sup>3052</sup> is He Who  
Sent down the Criterion<sup>3053</sup>  
To His Servant, that it<sup>3054</sup>  
May be an admonition  
To all creatures;—
2. He to Whom belongs  
The dominion of the heavens  
And the earth: no son  
Has He begotten, nor has He  
A partner in His dominion:  
It is He Who created  
All things, and ordered them  
In due proportions.<sup>3055</sup>
3. Yet have they taken,<sup>3056</sup>  
Besides Him, gods that can  
Create nothing but are themselves  
Created; that have no control  
Of hurt or good to themselves;  
Nor can they control Death  
Nor Life nor Resurrection.



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

١- تَبَارَكَ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ الْفُرْقَانَ  
عَلَى عَبْدِهِ لِيَكُونَ لِلْعَالَمِينَ نَذِيرًا

٢- الَّذِي لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَوَاتِ  
وَالْأَرْضِ وَلَمْ يَتَّخِذْ وَلَدًا  
وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفْرًا فِي الْمُلْكِ  
وَخَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ فَقَدَرَهُ تَقْدِيرًا

٣- وَاتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ آلِهَةً  
لَا يَخْلُقُونَ شَيْئًا وَهُمْ يُخْلَقُونَ  
وَلَا يَمْلِكُونَ أَنْفُسَهُمْ هَٰذَا  
لَا نَفْعًا وَلَا يَنْفَعُهُمْ

3052. *Tabāraka*: the root meaning is "increase" or "abundance". Here that aspect of God's dealing with His creatures is emphasised, which shows His abundant goodness to all His creatures, in that He sent the Revelation of His Will, not only in the unlimited Book of Nature, but in a definite Book in human language, which gives clear directions and admonitions to all. The English word "blessed" hardly conveys that meaning, but I can find no other without departing far from established usage. To emphasise the meaning I have explained, I have translated "Blessed is...", but "Blessed be..." is also admissible, as it brings out another shade of meaning, that we praise and bless His holy name.

3053. That by which we can judge clearly between right and wrong. Here the reference is to the Qur-ān, which has already been symbolised by Light. This symbol is continued here, and many contrasts are shown, in the midst of which we can distinguish between the true and the false by God's Light, especially the contrast between righteousness and sin.

3054. The pronoun in *yahūma* may refer either to *Furqān* (the Criterion) or to 'Abd (the holy Prophet). In either case the ultimate meaning is the same. The Qur-ān is the standing Criterion for judgment between right and wrong.

3055. The majesty of God and His independence of all wants or help are mentioned, to show how exceeding great is His goodness in revealing His Will to us.

3056. This is the first great distinction taught by the Criterion: to know the nature of the true God, as against the false fancies of men.

## 4. But the Misbelievers say :

"Naught is this but a lie<sup>3057</sup>  
Which he has forged,  
And others have helped him  
At it." In truth it is they  
Who have put forward  
An iniquity and a falsehood.

۴- وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنَّ هَذَا آيَاتُ

إِفْكٍ

افْتَرَاهُ وَآعَانَهُ عَلَيْهِ قَوْمٌ آخَرُونَ

فَقَدْ جَاءُوا ظُلُمًا وَزُورًا ۝

5. And they say : "Tales of  
The ancients, which he has caused  
To be written : and they  
Are dictated before him  
Morning and evening."<sup>3058</sup>

۵- وَقَالُوا اسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ اكْتَتَبَهَا

فَمَيَّ تَشْمَلُ عَلَيْهِ

بِكُرَّةٍ وَأَسِيْلًا ۝

6. Say : "The (Qur-an) was sent down  
By Him Who knows  
The Mystery (that is) in the  
heavens<sup>3059</sup>  
And the earth : verily He  
Is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."

۶- قُلْ أَنْزَلَهُ الَّذِي يَعْلَمُ

السِّرِّ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

إِنَّهُ كَانَ عَفُوًّا رَحِيمًا ۝

7. And they say : "What sort  
Of an apostle is this,  
Who eats food, and walks  
Through the streets? Why  
Has not an angel  
Been sent down to him  
To give admonition with him?"<sup>3060</sup>

۷- وَقَالُوا مَالِ هَذَا الرَّسُولِ

يَأْكُلُ الطَّعَامَ وَيَمْشِي فِي الْأَسْوَاقِ

لَوْ أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْهِ مَلَكٌ

فَيَكُونُ مَعَهُ نَذِيرٌ ۝

3057. *Ifk*, which I have translated a "lie", may be distinguished from *zūr* at the end of this verse, translated "falsehood". The "lie" which the enemies attributed to the holy man of God was supposed to be something which did not exist in reality, but was invented by the Prophet with the aid of other people : the implication was that (1) the Revelation was not a revelation but a forgery, and that (2) the things revealed, e.g., the news of the Hereafter, the Resurrection, the Judgment, the Bliss of the Righteous and the sufferings of the Evil, were fanciful and had no basis in fact. Delusion is also suggested. The reply is that, so far from that being the case, the facts were true and the charges were false (*zūr*).—the falsehood being due to the habits of iniquity for which the Misbelievers' whole mental and spiritual attitude was responsible.

3058. In their misguided arrogance they say : 'We have heard such things before ; they are pretty tales which have come down from ancient times ; they are good for amusement, but who takes them seriously?' When the beauty and power of the Revelation are pointed out, and its miracle as coming from an unlearned man, they again hint at other men who wrote them, though they could not produce any one who could write anything like it.

3059. The answer is that the Qur-ān teaches spiritual knowledge of what is ordinarily hidden from men's sight, and such knowledge can only come from God, to Whom alone is known the Mystery of the whole Creation. In spite of man's sin and shortcomings, He forgives, and He sends His most precious gift, i.e., the Revelation of His Will.

3060. This is another objection : 'He is only a man like us : why is not an angel sent down, if not by himself, at least with him?' The answer is : angels would be of no use to men as Messengers, as they and men would not understand each other, and if angels came, it might cause more confusion and wonder than understanding in men's minds. Cf xxi 7-8 ; xxvii. 94-95 The office of an angel is different. A teacher for mankind is one who shares their nature, mingles in their life, is acquainted with their doings, and sympathises with their joys and sorrows.

8. "Or (why) has not a treasure  
Been bestowed on him, or  
Why has he (not) a garden  
For enjoyment?"<sup>3061</sup> The wicked  
Say: "Ye follow none other  
Than a man bewitched."<sup>3062</sup>

٨- أَوِ يَلْقَى الْهَوَىٰ كَذِبًا أَوْ يَأْكُلُ الْخَالِصَ  
يَا كُلُّ مِثْمَا وَقَالَ الظَّالِمُونَ إِن تَتَّبِعُونَ  
إِلَّا رَجُلًا مَّسْحُورًا ۝

9. See what kinds of comparisons  
They make for thee!  
But they have gone astray,  
And never a way will they  
Be able to find!<sup>3063</sup>

٩- اُنْظُرْ كَيْفَ ضَرَبُوا لَكَ الْأَمْثَالَ  
فَضَلُّوا فَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ سَبِيلًا ۝

### SECTION 2.

10. Blessed is He Who,<sup>3064</sup>  
If that were His Will,  
Could give thee better (things)  
Than those,—Gardens beneath  
Rivers flow; and He could  
Give thee Palaces (secure  
To dwell in).<sup>which 3065</sup>

١٠- تَبَارَكَ الَّذِي إِنْ شَاءَ  
جَعَلَ لَكَ خَيْرًا  
مِّنْ ذَلِكَ جَدِّتْ تُجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا  
الْأَنْهَارُ وَيَجْعَلْ لَكَ قُصُورًا ۝

11. Nay, they deny the Hour  
(Of the Judgment to come):<sup>3066</sup>  
But We have prepared  
A Blazing Fire for such  
As deny the Hour:

١١- بَلْ كَذَّبُوا بِالسَّاعَةِ  
وَاعْتَدُوا نَارًا لِّمَن كَذَّبَ بِالسَّاعَةِ سَعِيرًا ۝

3061. Literally, 'that he may eat out of it'. As shown in n. 776 to v. 69, *akala* (to eat) has a comprehensive meaning, implying enjoyment of all kinds,—physical, social, mental and moral, and spiritual. Here, the garden itself stands for a type of the amenities of life: its fruits would be available for eating, its coolness for rest and refreshment, its waters and its landscape for æsthetic delight.

3062. Cf. xvii. 47. This speech, of the wicked or the ungodly, is meant to be even more bitter than that of the Misbelievers. It makes out the Teacher to be a demented fool!

3063. The charges the enemies made against the Apostle of God recoiled on those who made them. The Apostle was vindicated, and went from strength to strength, for God's Truth will always prevail. The men who perversely leave the way of truth, righteousness, and sincerity, have not only missed the Way, but on account of their perversity they will never be able to find any way by which they can get back to Truth.

3064. Cf. above, xxv. 1. The reminiscent phrase shows that the first argument, about the Revelation and Prophethood, is completed, and we now pass on to the contrast, the fate of the rejecters of both.

3065. This phrase is usually symbolical of the Bliss in the Hereafter. If it were God's Plan, He could give His Messengers complete felicity and power in this life also. Instead of being persecuted, mocked, driven out of their homes, and having to exert their utmost powers of body, mind, and character to plant the flag of Truth in an unbelieving world, they could have lived in ease and security. But that would not have given the real lessons they came to teach struggling humanity by their example.

3066. Denying the Hour of Judgment means denying the power of Justice and Truth to triumph; it means asserting the dominion of Evil. But the Reality itself will punish them, as shown in the following verses.

12. When it sees them  
From a place far off,  
They will hear its fury  
And its raging sigh.<sup>3067</sup>
13. And when they are cast,  
Bound together, into a  
Constricted place therein, they  
Will plead for destruction  
There and then!<sup>3068</sup>
14. "This day plead not  
For a single destruction:  
Plead for destruction oft-repeated!"
15. Say: "Is that best, or  
The eternal Garden, promised<sup>3069</sup>  
To the righteous? For them,  
That is a reward as well  
As a goal (of attainment).<sup>3070</sup>
16. "For them there will be  
Therein all that they wish for:  
They will dwell (there) for aye:  
A promise to be prayed for  
From thy Lord."<sup>3071</sup>
17. The Day He will gather  
Them together as well as  
Those whom they worship<sup>3072</sup>  
Besides God, He will ask:

۱۲- وَإِذَا رَأَوْهُمْ مِنْ مَكَانٍ بَعِيدٍ  
سَمِعُوا لَهَا تَوَهُّجًا وَنَفِيرًا ۝

۱۳- وَإِذَا أُلْقُوا مِنْهَا مَكَانًا ضَيِّقًا  
مَقْتَرِينَ دَعَوْا هُنَا لَكَ شُبُورًا ۝

۱۴- لَا تَدْعُوا الْيَوْمَ شُبُورًا وَاحِدًا  
وَأَدْعُوا شُبُورًا كَثِيرًا ۝

۱۵- قُلْ أَذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ أَمْ جَنَّةُ الْخُلْدِ  
الَّتِي وُعِدَ الْمُتَّقُونَ كَانَتْ لَهُمْ جَزَاءُ  
وَمَوْصِرًا ۝

۱۶- لَهُمْ فِيهَا مَا يَشَاءُونَ خَالِدِينَ  
كَانَ عَلَى رَبِّكَ وَعْدًا مَسْنُورًا ۝

۱۷- وَيَوْمَ يَحْشُرُهُمْ  
وَمَا يَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ قِيْقُولُ

3067. For *zafir*, a deep emission of breath or a sigh, see n. 1607 to xi. 106. Here the Fire is personified. It is raging with hunger and fury, and as soon as it sees them from ever so far, it emits a sigh of desire. Till then they had not realised their full danger. Now, just as their heart begins to tremble with terror, they are bound together—like with like,—and cast into the roaring flames!

3068. Anything—total annihilation—would be better than the anguish they will suffer. But no annihilation will be granted to them. One destruction will not be enough to wipe out the intensity of their anguish. They will have to ask for many destructions, but they will not get them!

3069. Shifting the scene back to this life, they may fairly be asked: "Here is the result of the two courses of conduct: which do you prefer?"

3070. To the righteous, the final Bliss will in one sense be a reward. But the word "reward" does not truly represent facts, for two reasons: (1) the Bliss will be greater than they deserved; and (2) righteousness is its own reward. The best way of expressing the result would be to say that their highest Wish will now have been attained; the goal will have been reached; they will be in God's Presence. That is salvation in the highest.

3071. That is the sort of thing—the Goal of God's Presence—to be prayed for from God, and not ephemeral things, even though they may be good. And that is the sort of thing that God has promised and undertaken to give.

3072. The question is as in a Court of Justice, to convince those who stand arraigned.

"Was it ye who led  
These My servants astray,  
Or did they stray  
From the Path themselves?"

18. They will say: "Glory to Thee!  
Not meet was it for us  
That we should take  
For protectors others besides

Thee: <sup>3073</sup>

But Thou didst bestow,  
On them and their fathers,  
Good things (in life), until  
They forgot the Message:  
For they were a people  
(Worthless and) lost."

19. (God will say): "Now  
Have they proved you liars  
In what ye say: so  
Ye cannot avert (your penalty) <sup>3074</sup>  
Nor (get) help." And whoever  
Among you does wrong,  
Him shall We cause to taste  
Of a grievous Penalty.

20. And the apostles whom We  
Sent before thee were all  
(Men) who ate food  
And walked through the streets: <sup>3075</sup>  
We have made some of you  
As a trial for others: <sup>3076</sup>  
Will ye have patience?  
18 For God is One Who  
30 Sees (all things).

أَأَنْتُمْ أَصْلَلْتُمْ عِبَادِي هَؤُلَاءِ  
أَمْ هُمْ ضَلُّوا السَّبِيلَ ۝

۱۸- قَالُوا اسْبِغْ لَنَا مِنْ مَنِّكَ  
إِنْ تَنْجِدُ مِنْ ذُنُوبِكِ مِنَ آلِهَاءِ  
وَلَكِنْ مَنَعْتَهُمْ وَأَبَاءَهُمْ  
حَتَّىٰ سَأَلُوا الذِّكْرَ  
وَكَانُوا قَوْمًا بُورًا ۝

۱۹- فَقَدْ كَذَّبْتُمْ بِمَا تَعْلَمُونَ  
فَمَا تَسْتَطِيعُونَ صَرْفًا وَلَا نَصْرًا  
وَمَنْ يَقْظُمْ رِجْلَهُ  
نُذِقْهُ عَذَابًا كَبِيرًا ۝

۲۰- وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا قَبْلَكَ مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ  
إِلَّا أَنْهُمْ لَيَا كُنُوزِ الطَّعَامِ وَيَسْتَخُونُونَ  
فِي الْأَسْوَاقِ وَجَعَلْنَا بَعْضَكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ  
فِتْنَةً أَنْتَصِرُونَ وَكَانَ رَبُّكَ بَصِيرًا ۝

3073. The creatures of God who were worshipped will prove that they never asked for worship: on the contrary they themselves worshipped God and sought the protection of God and of none but God. They will go further and show that the false worshippers added ingratitude to their other sins: for God bestowed abundance on them, and they blasphemed against God. They were indeed "worthless and lost", for the word *būr* bears both significations.

3074. The argument is as in a court of justice. If the false worshippers plead that they were misled by those whom they falsely worshipped, the latter will be confronted with them and will prove that plea to be false. No help can be got from them, and the penalty cannot then be averted. After all these things are thus explained in detail beforehand, all ungodly men should repent and turn to God. False worship is here identified with sin, for sin is disobedience to God, and arises from a wrong appreciation of God's nature and His goodness to His creatures. The sinful man refuses, in his conduct, to serve God: he serves other things than God.

3075. Cf. above, xxv. 7.

3076. In God's universal Plan, each unit or thing serves a purpose. If some are rich, the poor should not envy them: it may be that the rich man's proximity is itself a trial of their virtue. If some are poor, the righteous rich should not despise or neglect them: it may be that their coming within their sight is a trial for the real feeling of charity or brotherly love in the rich. If A is bad-tempered or persecutes or ill-uses B, it may be an opportunity for B to show his patience or humility or his faith in the ultimate prevalence of justice and truth. Whatever our experiences with other human beings may be, we must make them subserve the ends of our spiritual improvement and perhaps theirs also.

- C. 162.—Woe to the misbelievers who arrogantly  
 (xxv. 21-44.) Demand to see God, yet reject  
 His Signs ! The Judgment will come,  
 And then they will see, too late, how evil  
 Casts nothing but treacherous snares for man.  
 Slowly comes God's Revelation, in ways  
 Most conducive to man's enlightenment.  
 Men in their folly reject the most obvious  
 Signs of God. Let them mock ! Soon  
 Will they know ! Alas ! men ruled by self-impulse  
 Are worse than brute beasts to guide or control !

## SECTION 3.

21. Such as fear not  
 The meeting with Us <sup>3077</sup>  
 (For Judgment) say :  
 " Why are not the angels  
 Sent down to us, or  
 (Why) do we not see <sup>3078</sup>  
 Our Lord ? " Indeed they  
 Have an arrogant conceit  
 Of themselves, and mighty  
 Is the insolence of their impiety !

۲۱- وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَرْجُونَ لِقَاءَنَا  
 لَوْلَا أُنْزِلَ عَلَيْنَا الْمَلَائِكَةُ  
 أَوْ نُنْزِلَ رَبَّنَا  
 لَقَدْ اسْتَكْبَرُوا فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ  
 وَعَتَوْهُ عُتْوًا كَبِيرًا ○

22. The Day they see the angels, —  
 No joy will there be  
 To the sinners that Day :  
 The (angels) will say :  
 " There is a barrier  
 Forbidden (to you) altogether ! " <sup>3079</sup>

۲۲- يَوْمَ يَرَوْنَ الْمَلَائِكَةَ  
 لَا بُشْرَىٰ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْمُجْرِمِينَ  
 وَيَقُولُونَ حَبْرًا مَّحْجُورًا ○

23. And We shall turn  
 To whatever deeds they did  
 (In this life), and We shall  
 Make such deeds as floating dust  
 Scattered about. <sup>3080</sup>

۲۳- وَقَدْ مَنَّ آلُ مَا عَمِلُوا مِنْ عَمَلٍ  
 بِجَعَلْنَاهُ هَبَاءً مَنْثُورًا ○

3077. The blasphemers who have given up all Faith and laugh at the Hereafter: nothing is sacred to them: their arrogance and insolence are beyond all bounds.

3078. Cf. ii. 55. The Israelites in the time of Moses demanded to see God. But they were dazed with thunder and lightning even as they looked on. Indeed death would have been their fate, had it not been for the mercy of God.

3079. They will not be allowed to enjoy any of the felicity or peace which will be the normal state of the new world of Reality. Their own past will stand as a barrier to shut them off.

3080. The false hopes they built on in this life, and the deeds they did under the shadow of such false hopes will be dissipated as if they were dust flying about in the wind. They will have no value whatever.

24. The Companions of the Garden  
Will be well, that Day,  
In their abode, and have  
The fairest of places for repose.<sup>3081</sup>

٢٣- أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ يَوْمَئِذٍ خَيْرٌ مُّسْتَقَرًّا  
وَأَحْسَنُ مَقِيلًا ○

25. The Day the heaven shall be  
Rent asunder with clouds,<sup>3082</sup>  
And angels shall be sent down,  
Descending (in ranks),—

٢٥- وَيَوْمَ نَشَقُّ السَّمَاءَ بِالسَّعَابِ  
وَنُرْزِلُ الْمَلَائِكَةَ مُتَنَزِّلًا ○

26. That Day, the dominion  
As of right and truth,  
Shall be (wholly) for (God)<sup>3083</sup>  
Most Merciful: it will be  
A Day of dire difficulty  
For the Misbelievers.

٢٦- أَلَمْ تَكُنْ يَوْمَئِذٍ  
الْحَقِّ لِلرَّحْمَنِ  
وَكَانَ يَوْمًا عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ عَسِيرًا ○

27. The Day that the wrong-doer  
Will bite at his hands,  
He will say, "Oh! would that  
I had taken a (straight) path  
With the Apostle!"<sup>3084</sup>

٢٧- وَيَوْمَ يَعْصِي الظَّالِمُ عَلَى يَدَيْهِ  
يَقُولُ يَا لَيْتَنِي اتَّخَذْتُ  
مَعَ الرَّسُولِ سَبِيلًا ○

28. "Ah! woe is me!  
Would that I had never  
Taken such a one  
For a friend!

٢٨- يَوْمَئِذٍ لَيْتَنِي  
لَمْ أَتَّخِذْ فُلَانًا حَلِيلًا ○

29. "He did lead me astray  
From the Message (of God)  
After it had come to me!  
Ah! the Evil One is  
But a traitor to man!"<sup>3085</sup>

٢٩- لَقَدْ أَضَلَّنِي عَنِ الذِّكْرِ بَعْدَ إِذْ  
جَاءَنِي وَكَانَ الشَّيْطَانُ لِلْإِنْسَانِ  
عَدُوًّا ○

3081. The barrier which will shut out the evil ones will not exist for the righteous, who will have an abode of bliss and repose, for they will be in the Garden of God's Good Pleasure.

3082. It will be a new world, and the symbolism to describe it must necessarily draw upon our present experience of the finest things in nature. The sky, which now appears remote and unpeopled will be rent asunder. There will appear clouds of glory—angels and spiritual Lights of all grades and ranks (see Appendix VIII),—and the true majesty and goodness of God will be visible as it should be in reality, and as it is not now, on account of "our muddy vesture of decay".

3083. See last note.

3084. The words are general, and for us the interest is in a general sense. A man who actually receives the Truth and is on the right path is all the more culpable if he is diverted from that path by the machinations of a worldly friend. The particular person whom some Commentators mention in this connection was one 'Uqba who received the light of Islam, but was misled afterwards by a worldly friend into apostasy and blasphemy. He came to an evil end afterwards.

3085. The seductive wiles of the Evil One are merely meant for snares. There is fraud and treachery in them. The deceived ones are left in the lurch after the way of escape is made impossible for them.

30. Then the Apostle will say :  
 " O my Lord ! Truly  
 My people took this Qur-an  
 For just foolish nonsense." <sup>3086</sup>

۳۰- وَقَالَ الرَّسُولُ يَرْبِّ اِنِّى  
 قَدْ جِئْتُ بِالْحَقِّ وَاهَذَا الْقُرْآنُ مَهْجُورٌ

31. Thus have We made  
 For every prophet an enemy  
 Among the sinners : but enough  
 Is thy Lord to guide  
 And to help. <sup>3087</sup>

۳۱- وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَا لِكُلِّ نَبِيٍّ عَدُوًّا  
 مِنَ الْمُجْرِمِينَ وَكَفَى  
 بِرَبِّكَ هَادِيًا وَنَصِيرًا ۝

32. Those who reject Faith  
 Say : " Why is not the Qur-an  
 Revealed to him all at once ?  
 Thus (is it revealed), that We  
 May strengthen thy heart <sup>3088</sup>  
 Thereby, and We have  
 Rehearsed it to thee in slow,  
 Well-arranged stages, gradually.

۳۲- وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا  
 لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ الْقُرْآنُ جُمْلَةً وَّاحِدَةً  
 كَذَلِكَ لِنُثَبِّتَ بِهِ فُؤَادَكَ  
 وَرَتَّلْنَاهُ تَرْتِيلًا ۝

33. And no question do they  
 Bring to thee but We  
 Reveal to thee the truth  
 And the best explanation  
 (thereof). <sup>3089</sup>

۳۳- وَلَا يَأْتُونَكَ بِمَثَلٍ  
 إِلَّا جَعَلْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَأَحْسَنَ تَفْسِيرًا ۝

3086. "My people" are of course the unbelieving Quraish. But they were only a handful of people, whose vested interests were touched by the beneficent reforms initiated by Islam. They soon passed away, and all Arabic-speaking or Arabic-understanding people have considered the Qur-an as a treasury of Truths expressed in the most beautiful possible language, with a meaning that grows deeper with research.

3087. It is the nature of sin to be hostile to truth and righteousness, but such hostility will not harm the righteous and need cause no misgiving, because God will guide and help those who work in His cause. And what could be better or more effective than His guidance and help ?

3088. Three reasons are given for the gradual revelation of the Qur-an. (1) "To strengthen thy heart" : the tremendous task of winning the Arab nation, and, through them, the whole world, to Islam, required superhuman patience, constancy, and firmness, and these qualities were strengthened by the gradual promulgation of solutions to each difficulty as it arose. (2) "Slow, well-arranged stages" : though the stages were gradual, as the occasion demanded from time to time, in the course of twenty-three years, the whole emerged, when completed, as a well-arranged scheme of spiritual instruction, as we have seen in following the arrangement of the Sūras. (3) Questions put and answers given : See next note.

3089. Divine knowledge is a fathomless ocean. But glimpses of it can be obtained by any individuals sincerely searching for the Truth. Their progress will be in grades. If they ask questions, and answers are then furnished to them, they are more likely to apprehend the Truth, as they have already explored the part of the territory in which they are interested. In the same way, when concrete questions arise by the logic of events, and they are answered not only for the occasion, but from a general stand-point, the teaching has a far greater chance of penetrating the human intelligence and taking shape in practical conduct. And this is the usual way of instruction in the Qur-an.



34. Those who will be gathered  
To Hell (prone) on their faces,—<sup>3090</sup>  
They will be in an evil  
Plight, and, as to Path,  
Most astray.<sup>3091</sup>

## SECTION 4.

35. Before this, We sent Moses  
The Book, and appointed  
His brother Aaron with him  
As Minister ;<sup>3092</sup>
36. And We commanded : " Go ye.  
Both, to the people who  
Have rejected our Signs : "  
And those (people) We destroyed  
With utter destruction.
37. And the people of Noah,—  
When they rejected the apostles,  
We drowned them,  
And We made them  
As a Sign for mankind ;<sup>3093</sup>  
And We have prepared  
For (all) wrong-doers  
A grievous Penalty ;—
38. As also 'Ad and Thamūd,  
And the Companions<sup>3094</sup>

الَّذِينَ يُخْشَرُونَ عَلَىٰ وُجُوهِهِمْ إِلَىٰ  
جَهَنَّمَ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ مَكَانًا  
وَأَضَلُّ سَبِيلًا ۝

۝ وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ وَجَعَلْنَا  
مَعَ أَخَاهُ هَارُونَ وَزِيرًا ۝

۝ فَقُلْنَا أَذْهَبَا إِلَى الْقَوْمِ  
الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا  
فَدَمَّرْنَاهُمْ تَذْوِيرًا ۝

۝ وَقَوْمِ نُوحٍ لَمَّا كَذَّبُوا الرُّسُلَ  
أَغْرَقْنَاهُمْ وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ لِلنَّاسِ آيَةً  
وَأَعْتَدْنَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ  
عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا ۝

۝ وَعَادًا وَثَمُودًا وَأَضَلُّ

3090. That is, in ignominy.

3091. This verse may be compared and contrasted with xxv. 24 above. Here the argument is rounded off about the distinction between the Good and Evil in their final Destiny. The Good are to have "the fairest of places for repose", and in contrast, the Evil are, "as to Path, most astray". They have no repose, and their wanderings lead nowhere.

3092. Cf. xx. 29, and the whole passage there, which is merely referred to here, to show how previous apostles were treated, but how they stuck fast to the Criterion given, to distinguish between Good and Evil.

3093. The stories of Noah, of the prophets of 'Ad and Thamūd (and of other prophets), in the reactions of their communities to their teaching, are told in xxvi. 105-159, below. Here they are just mentioned to illustrate how little respect past ages had for their prophets and teachers of Truth. But God's Truth did not suffer: it was the blind rejecters of spiritual Truth who were wiped out.

3094. Commentators are not clear as to who the "*Companions of the Rass*" were. The root meaning of "*rass*" is an old well or shallow water-pit. Another root connects it with the burial of the dead. But it is probably the name of a town or place. The "*Companions of the Rass*" may well have been the people of Shu'aib, as they are here mentioned with the 'Ad, the Thamūd, and Lot's people, and the people of Shu'aib are mentioned in a similar connection in xxvi. 176-190 and in xi. 84-95. Shu'aib was the prophet of the Madyan people in the north-west of Arabia, where many old wells are found. There is however an oasis town *al-Rass* in the district of Qagim in Middle Najd, about thirty-five miles south-west of the town of 'Unaiza, reputed to be the central point of the Arabian Peninsula, and situated midway between Mecca and Baṣra. See Doughty's *Arabia Deserta*, thin paper one-volume edition, London 1926, II. 435. and Map, Lat. 26°N., and Long. 43°E.

Of the Rass; and many  
A generation between them.

39. To each one We set forth  
Parables and examples;  
And each one We broke  
To utter annihilation  
(For their sins).
40. And the (Unbelievers) must indeed  
Have passed by the town  
On which was rained <sup>3095</sup>  
A shower of evil: did they not  
Then see it (with their own  
Eyes)? But they fear not  
The Resurrection.
41. ~~When~~ When they see thee,  
They treat thee no otherwise  
Than in mockery: "Is this  
The one whom God has sent  
As an apostle?"
42. "He indeed would well-nigh  
Have misled us from  
Our gods, had it not been  
That we were constant  
To them!"—Soon will they  
Know, when they see  
The Penalty, who it is  
That is most misled  
In Path! <sup>3096</sup>
43. Seest thou such a one  
As taketh for his god  
His own passion (or impulse)?  
Couldst thou be a disposer  
Of affairs for him? <sup>3097</sup>

الزَّيْنِ وَقَوْمُنَا بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ كَثِيرٌ ۝

٣٩- وَكُلًّا صَبَّأْنَاهُ الْآمِثَالِ  
وَكُلًّا تَكَثَّرْنَا تَنْهِيْدًا ۝

٤٠- وَلَقَدْ أَتَوْا عَلَى الْقَرْيَةِ الَّتِي  
أَمْطَرْنَا مِنْهَا السَّوْرَ  
أَفَلَمْ يَكُونُوا يَرَوْنها  
بَلْ كَانُوا لَا يَتَنَبَّهُونَ شَيْئًا ۝

٤١- وَإِذَا رَأَوْكَ إِذْ يَكْفُكِدُ عَلَيْكَ وَإِذَا هُزُوا  
هَٰذَا الَّذِي بَعَثَ اللَّهُ رَسُولًا ۝

٤٢- إِنْ كَادَ لَيُضِلَّنَا عَنْ الْهَدْيِ  
لَوْلَا أَنْ صَبَّرْنَا عَلَيْهَا  
وَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ حِينَ يَرَوْنَ الْعَذَابَ  
مَنْ أَضَلَّ سَبِيلًا ۝

٤٣- أَرَأَيْتَ مَنْ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهَهُ هَوَاهُ  
أَفَأَنْتَ تَكُونُ عَلَيْهِ وَكِيلًا ۝

3095. This refers to L.D.'s story and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the wicked cities of the plain near the Dead Sea, by a shower of brimstone. The site lies on the highway between Arabia and Syria. Cf. xv. 74, 76, and n. 1998.

3096. "Path" (Sabil) is almost equivalent here to conduct, way of life.

3097. The man who worships his own passions or impulses or desires is the most hopeless to teach or lead or guide. If it were anything else the matter with him, the Teacher could argue with him. But Reason cannot prevail over blind passion. It is vain to hope that such a man could be led, until his mad desires are killed. No one could undertake any responsibility for him, for he obeys no law and follows no advice. He is worse than brute beasts, which may not understand, but at least follow the wholesome instincts implanted in them by God. The lawless man has killed his instincts and is unwilling to submit to guidance.

44. Or thinkest thou that most  
Of them listen or understand?  
They are only like cattle;—  
Nay, they are worse astray  
In Path.

أَمْ تَحْسَبُ أَنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ  
أَوْ يَعْقِلُونَ إِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا كَالْأَنْعَامِ  
بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ سَبِيلًا ۝

C. 163.—But the Signs of God are everywhere  
(xxv. 45-77.) In creation. The Sun and the Shadow,  
The Day and the Night, the Wind and the Rain,—  
All things in nature are symbols, and point  
To the Law Divine, and the destiny, good  
Or ill, of man. Will he not learn  
And put his trust in Him, the Merciful?  
His true servants ever adore him  
In humility and fear of wrong, in faith  
And just moderation in life, in respect  
For duties owed to God and men  
And self, in avoidance of all that is false  
Or futile, in strict and grateful attention  
To God's Message, and in the wish  
To put themselves and their families  
In the van of those who love and honour God.

## SECTION 5.

45. Hast thou not turned<sup>3098</sup>  
Thy vision to thy Lord?—  
How He doth prolong<sup>3099</sup>  
The Shadow! If He willed,  
He could make it stationary!  
Then do We make<sup>3100</sup>  
The sun its guide;

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ كَيْفَ مَدَّ الظِّلَّ  
وَلَوْ شَاءَ جَعَلَهُ سَاكِنًا  
ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَا الشَّمْسُ عَلَيْهِ دَلِيلًا ۝

3098. We saw in xxiv. 35 that God is the Light of the heavens and the earth, and we tried, in Appendix VIII, to catch a glimpse of the mystic meaning under the guidance of Imām Qazālī. We have now another sublime passage, in which we are asked to contemplate the Glory of God by a parable of the subtle play of Light and Shade in God's creation. Let us first understand the literal meaning as applied to the physical world, before attempting the spiritual interpretation, which takes us (if we are worthy) to the foot of the Throne of Glory.

3099. In our artificial life and surroundings we fail to see some of the finest mysteries of Light and Shade. We praise, and rightly, the wonderful colours of sunset. We see, particularly in climates more northerly than that of India, the subtle play of Light and Shade in the twilights succeeding sunsets. If we were as assiduous in seeing sunrises and the play of Light and Shade preceding them, we should see phenomena even more impressive, as the early morning seems to us more holy than any other time in the twenty-four hours of the sun's daily journey. There is first the false dawn, with its curious uncertain light and the curious long uncertain shadows which it casts. Then there are the streaks of black in the East, succeeded by the true dawn, with its delicate tones of colours and light and shade. The light of this true or false Dawn is not given by the direct rays of the sun. In a sense it is not light, but the shadows or reflections of light. And they gradually merge into actual sunrise, with its more substantial or more defined shadows, which we can definitely connect with the sun.

3100. The morning shadows are long but more definite, and their length and direction are open to be guided by the sun. But they change insensibly every second or fraction of a second,

46. Then We draw it in <sup>3101</sup>  
Towards Ourselves,—  
A contraction by easy stages. <sup>3102</sup>

47. And He it is Who makes  
The Night as a Robe  
For you, and Sleep as Repose,  
And makes the Day  
(As it were) a Resurrection. <sup>3103</sup>

48. And He it is Who sends  
The Winds as heralds  
Of glad tidings, going before <sup>3104</sup>  
His Mercy, and We send down

٣٦ ثُمَّ قَبَضْنَاهُ إِلَيْنَا قَبْضًا يَسِيرًا

٣٧ وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ اللَّيْلَ لِبَاسًا  
وَالنَّوْمَ سُبَاتًا  
وَجَعَلَ النَّهَارَ نُشُورًا

٣٨ وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ الرِّيْحَ  
بَشِيرَاتٍ بَيْنَ يَدَيْ رَحْمَتِهِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا

3101. As the sun rises higher and higher, the shadows contract. In regions where the sun gets actually to the zenith at noon, there is no shadow left at that time. Where does it go to? It was but a shadow cast by a substance, and it gets absorbed by the substance which produced it. But all material substances are themselves but shadows (xvi 48, and n. 1074), and the only true Reality is God, to Whom all things return. Thus are shadows absorbed in the self-subsisting Reality.

3102. Let us now reverently turn our vision (as far as we are able) to the symbolic meaning. God is the Light. All things in creation—whether concrete or abstract—are but shadows, depending on His Light. All shadows are not equal. He gives length or size or substance to such as He pleases. And some shadows almost become reflected lights, like the light of the false or the true Dawn. Such are holy men, in all kinds of gradations. The shadows are constantly in a state of flux; so are all things in Creation, all things we see or covet in this life. God, if He wills, can give some of them greater fixity or comparative stability. The sun is but a shadow of God's Light; yet it illuminates our whole world. So the great Prophet of the Age derives his light from God, and we can light our little spiritual candles from him. Or the Revelation is the sun's light, and we can light our life with it. As the light of the sun is identified with the sun, which is its living source, so is Revelation identified with the living Prophet through whom it comes.

3103. Here the symbolism presents a fresh point of view. It is still the contrast between Light and Shade; but the shade of Night is as a Robe to cover and screen us and give us Repose from activity; and the Light of Day is for striving, work, activity. Or again, the Night is like Death, our temporary Death before Judgment, the time during which our senses are as sealed in Sleep; and the Day is like the renewal of Life at the Resurrection.

3104. Cf. vii, 57. The Winds are heralds of Joy, ushering in Rain, which is one form of God's Mercy. Again, the symbolism presents a fresh point of view. Heat (which is connected with light) sets up currents in the atmosphere, besides sucking up moisture from the seas, and distributing it by means of Winds over wide surfaces of the earth. In the physical world we know the beneficent action of heat on life, and by contrast, we also know how intolerable high temperatures may become, and how the cloud-bearing Winds come as welcome heralds of rain. This is particularly true where there are marked contrasts of drought and rain as in India. The Monsoon winds and clouds are the Good Angels of Rain, as in Kalidas's "Megha-dūta". The symbolic meaning refers to God's Mercy, which to the ungodly may be as intolerable as extreme summer heat in the physical world, but which performs its beneficent mission of fostering care to all Creation. It may produce apparently unpleasant movements like Storms. But in reality they distribute God's Message, His greatest gift, among mankind, and are thus really heralds of joy to all who understand,

Purifying water from the sky,—<sup>3105</sup>

49. That with it We may give  
Life to a dead land,  
And slake the thirst  
Of things We have created,—<sup>3106</sup>  
Cattle and men in great numbers.

50. And We have distributed  
The (water) amongst them, in  
order<sup>3107</sup>  
That they may celebrate  
(Our) praises, but most men  
Are averse (to aught) but<sup>3108</sup>  
(Rank) ingratitude.

51. ~~Had~~ it been Our Will,  
We could have sent  
A warner to every centre  
Of population.<sup>3109</sup>

52. Therefore listen not  
To the Unbelievers, but strive

مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً طَهُورًا ۝

٣٩-الرَّيْحُ بِهِ بُلْدٌ ءَمِينًا  
وَتُسْقِيهِمْ مِمَّا خَلَقْنَا أَنْعَامًا  
وَآنَاسٍ كَثِيرًا ۝

٥٠-وَلَقَدْ صَرَّفْنَاهُ بَيْنَهُمْ  
لِيَكُنْ لَكُمْ ءَايَةً ۝

فَأَكْثَرُ الْكَاسِرِ إِلَّا كُفُورًا ۝

٥١-وَلَوْ شِئْنَا

لَبَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ قَرْيَةٍ نَذِيرًا ۝

٥٢-فَلَا تُطِعِ الْكَافِرِينَ وَجَاهِدْهُمْ

3105. Rain water (in pure air) is not only pure water distilled in air and sky, but it is the best purifying and sanitating agent on the largest scale known to us.

3106. The whole cycle of water,—sea, clouds, rain or hail or snow, rivers, and sea again,—is a remarkable illustration of the processes of nature making God's providence visible to us. The salts of the sea sanitize and purify all the filth that pours into it. Water action, in the form of rain, frost, glaciers, rivers, lakes, etc., is responsible for the building up and configuration of the crust of the earth, and is the chief agent in physical geography. A parched desert quickly comes to life under the action of water. All drinking water, whether derived from rivers, canals, lakes, reservoirs, springs, wells, or water-works of any kind, are ultimately traceable to rain. The connection of life with water is intimate. The physical basis of life itself, protoplasm, is in great part water: see xxv. 54 below.

3107. The water is distributed all over the world, in order that all life may receive its support according to its needs. In xxv. 48-50, we have the argument of contrasts stated in another way. Water is life, and is made available to sustain life all over the world: this is a physical fact which all can see. But water is also the symbol of spiritual life, whose sustaining principle is the Will of God as made known to us through Revelation. It sometimes comes to us in our inward or spiritual storms. Many violent unsettlements of the spirit are but heralds of the refreshing showers of spiritual understanding that come in their wake. They purify our souls, and produce spiritual Life even where there was a parched spiritual desert before. They continue to sustain us in our normal spiritual Life out of the reservoirs of God's Revelation, which are open to all, and well distributed in time and space. The universality of distribution is again referred to in the following verse.

3108. In contrast to God's abounding Mercy is man's base ingratitude: another symbolical contrast between Light and Darkness, or Water and Drought.

3109. God's Message has been distributed to all nations. If it had been necessary, a Prophet could have been sent to every town and village. But God's Plan is different. He has sent His Light to every heart, through His Signs in man's conscience, in Nature, and in Revelation.

Against them with the utmost  
Strenuousness, with the (Qur-an).<sup>3110</sup>

بِهَاجِهَادًا كَبِيرًا ۝

53. It is He Who has  
Let free the two bodies  
Of flowing water :<sup>3111</sup>  
One palatable and sweet,  
And the other salt  
And bitter ; yet has He  
Made a barrier between them,  
A partition that is forbidden  
To be passed.<sup>3112</sup>

۝ وَهُوَ الَّذِي مَرَجَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ  
هَذَا عَذْبٌ فُرَاتٌ  
وَهَذَا مِلْحٌ أُجَاجٌ ۚ  
وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَهُمَا بَرْزَخًا  
وَحِجْرًا مَحْجُورًا ۝

54. It is He Who has  
Created man from water :<sup>3113</sup>  
Then has He established  
Relationships of lineage<sup>3114</sup>

۝ وَهُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ مِنَ الْمَاءِ بَشَرًا  
فَجَعَلَهُ نَسَبًا

3110 The distribution of God's Signs being universal, the man of God pays no heed to carping critics who reject Faith. He wages the biggest Jihād of all, with the weapon of God's Revelation.

3111, *Maraja* : literally, let free or let loose cattle for grazing. *Bahrain* : two seas, or two bodies of flowing water ; for *bahr* is applied both to the salt sea and to rivers. In the world taken as a whole, there are two bodies of water, viz. : (1) the great salt Ocean, and (2) the bodies of sweet water fed by rain, whether they are rivers, lakes, or underground springs : their source in rain makes them one, and their drainage, whether above-ground, or underground, eventually to the Ocean, also makes them one. They are free to mingle, and in a sense they do mingle, for there is a regular water cycle : see n. 3106 above : and the rivers flow constantly to the sea, and tidal rivers get sea-water for several miles up their estuaries at high tide. Yet in spite of all this, the laws of gravitation are like a barrier or partition set by God, by which the two bodies of water as a whole are always kept apart and distinct. In the case of rivers carrying large quantities of water to the sea, like the Mississippi or the Yangtse-Kiang, the river-water with its silt remains distinct from sea-water for a long distance out at sea. But the wonderful Sign is that the two bodies of water, though they pass through each other, remain distinct bodies, with their distinct functions.

3112. Again a new symbolic contrast ; the two bodies of water, sweet and salt, free to intermingle, yet distinct as by an impassable barrier. Sweet water is the wholesome spiritual desires of man fed by the rain of God's Revelation ; salt water is the bundle of worldly desires, ambitions, passions, and motives of man : the two may seem to mingle, yet they are always distinct, and there is an impassable barrier between them. The righteous judgment is the Criterion that distinguishes between them. Further, the two bodies of water, or the two seas, may mean the two kinds of knowledge, divine and human, as in the allegory in the story of Moses : see xviii. 60, and notes 2404 and 2405.

3113. The basis of all living matter in the physical world, protoplasm, is water : Cf. xxiv. 45 and xxi. 30, and notes thereon.

3114. Water is a fluid, unstable thing : yet from it arises the highest form of life known to us, in this world, man. And man has not only the functions and characteristics of the noblest animals, but his abstract relationships are also typical of his highest nature. He can trace lineage and pedigree, and thus remember and commemorate a long line of ancestors, to whom he is bound by ties of piety, which no mere animal can do. Further, there is the mystic union in marriage : it is not only like the physical union of animals, but it gives rise to relationships arising out of the sexes of individuals who were not otherwise related to each other. These are physical and social facts. But behind them, again, is the symbolical lesson of spiritual contrasts : as there is a long way to go between water and man, so there is a long way to go between an ordinary man and him who is lifted up to divine Light. As opposite sexes, though different in function, are one and contribute to each other's happiness, so persons of diverse talents may unite in the spiritual world for their own highest good and in the service of God.

And marriage: for thy Lord  
Has power (over all things).

55. Yet do they worship,  
Besides God, things that can  
Neither profit them nor  
Harm them: and the Misbeliever  
Is a helper (of Evil),  
Against his own Lord! <sup>3115</sup>

56. But thee We only sent  
To give glad tidings  
And admonition.

57. Say: "No reward do I  
Ask of you for it but this:  
That each one who will  
May take a (straight) Path  
To his Lord."

58. And put thy trust  
In Him Who lives  
And dies not; and celebrate  
His praise; and enough is He  
To be acquainted with  
The faults of His servants;—<sup>3116</sup>

59. He Who created the heavens  
And the earth and all  
That is between, in six days,<sup>3117</sup>  
And is firmly established  
On the Throne (of authority):<sup>3118</sup>  
God Most Gracious:  
Ask thou, then, about Him  
Of any acquainted (with such  
things).<sup>3119</sup>

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُمْ أَنْ يَكُونُوا كَذِبًا

۵۵- وَيَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ  
مَا لَا يَنْفَعُهُمْ وَلَا يَضُرُّهُمْ  
وَكَانَ الْكَافِرُ عَلَىٰ رَبِّهِ ظَهِيرًا

۵۶- وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا مُبَشِّرًا وَنَذِيرًا

۵۷- قُلْ مَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِلَّا  
مَنْ شَاءَ أَنْ يَتَّخِذَ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِ سَبِيلًا

۵۸- وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَىٰ الرَّحْمَنِ الَّذِي  
لَا يَمُوتُ وَسَيَكُونُ مَحْمَدًا  
وَكُفِّ بِهِ عَنْكَ عَنْ أَسْفَادٍ خَيْرٌ

۵۹- الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا  
بَيْنَهُمَا فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ  
ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ الرَّحْمَنُ  
فَسْأَلْ بِهِ خَيْرًا

3115. Here is the highest contrast of all,—material things which are inert, and God, Whose goodness and power are supreme: Faith and Unfaith, meriting glad tidings and admonition; the selfish man who is self-centred, and the man of God, who works for others without reward.

3116. God knows our faults better than we or anyone else. It is no use hiding anything from Him. We must put our trust completely in Him. His care is for all, and He is God Most Gracious.

3117. Cf. vii. 54 and n. 1031.

3118. See n. 1386 to x. 3.

3119. The argument is about the question, in whom shall we put our trust? Worldly men put their trust in worldly things: the righteous man only in God. The true distinction will be quite clear from a ray of divine knowledge. If you do not see it all clearly, ask of those who possess such knowledge.

60. When it is said to them,  
 "Adore ye (God) Most Gracious!",  
 They say, "And what is (God)  
 Most Gracious? Shall we adore  
 That which thou commandest us?"  
 And it increases their flight  
 (From the Truth).<sup>3120</sup>

٦٠- وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ اسْجُدُوا لِلرَّحْمَنِ  
 قَالُوا وَمَا الرَّحْمَنُ  
 أَنْسُجِدُ لِمَا كَانُوا مِنْكُمْ  
 وَرَأَاهُمْ نُفُورًا ۝

#### SECTION 6.

61. Blessed is He Who made  
 Constellations in the skies,  
 And placed therein a Lamp<sup>3121</sup>  
 And a Moon giving light;

٦١- تَبَارَكَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ فِي السَّمَاءِ بُرُوجًا  
 وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا سِرَاجًا وَقَمَرًا مُنِيرًا ۝

62. And it is He Who made  
 The Night and the Day  
 To follow each other:  
 For such as have the will<sup>3122</sup>  
 To celebrate His praises  
 Or to show their gratitude.

٦٢- وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ خِلْفَةً  
 لِمَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يَذَّكَّرَ  
 أَوْ أَرَادَ شُكُورًا ۝

63. And the servants of (God)  
 Most Gracious are those  
 Who walk on the earth  
 In humility, and when the  
 ignorant<sup>3123</sup>  
 Address them, they say,  
 "Peace!";

٦٣- وَعِبَادُ الرَّحْمَنِ الَّذِينَ  
 يَمْشُونَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ هَوْنًا  
 وَإِذَا خَاطَبَهُمُ الْجَاهِلُونَ  
 قَالُوا سَلَامًا ۝

3120. Those who have no spiritual Light cannot understand this precept about putting all our trust in God. It seems to them foolish. They have no faith, or but a superficial faith. They may possibly take the name of God on their lips, but they cannot understand the full significance of His title of *Rahmān* (Most Gracious). Perhaps they are afraid on account of their sins; perhaps they do not see how unbounded is the Mercy of God. Such men are contrasted against the true servants of God, who are described below in xxv. 63-75.

3121. The glorious Lamp of the skies is the Sun; and next to him is the Moon, which gives borrowed light. The Constellations of course include the Signs of the Zodiac, which mark the path of the planets in the heavens.

3122. The scenes of the phenomenal world are Signs of the Self-Revelation of God, for those who understand and who have the will to merge their wills in His. This they do (1) by praising Him, which means understanding something of His nature, and (2) by gratitude to Him, which means carrying out His Will, and doing good to their fellow-creatures. These two attitudes of mind and heart give rise to various consequences in their lives, which are detailed in the following verses.

3123. *Ignorant*: in a spiritual sense. *Address*: in the aggressive sense. Their humility is shown in two ways: (1) to those in real search of knowledge, they give such knowledge as they have and as the recipients can assimilate; (2) to those who merely dispute, they do not speak harshly, but say "Peace!", as much as to say, "May it be well with you, may you repent and be better"; or "May God give me peace from such wrangling"; or "Peace, and Good-bye; let me leave you!"



64. Those who spend the night  
In adoration of their Lord  
Prostrate and standing;<sup>3124</sup>

۞ وَالَّذِينَ يَبِيتُونَ لِرَبِّهِمْ سُجَّدًا  
وَقِيَامًا ۝

65. Those who say, "Our Lord!  
Avert from us the Wrath  
Of Hell, for its Wrath  
Is indeed an affliction  
grievous,—"<sup>3125</sup>

۞ وَالَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا  
اصْرِفْ عَنَّا عَذَابَ جَهَنَّمَ  
إِنَّ عَذَابَهَا كَانَ غَرَامًا ۝

66. "Evil indeed is it  
As an abode, and as  
A place to rest in";<sup>3126</sup>

۞ إِنَّهَا سَاءَتْ مُسْتَقَرًّا وَمُقَامًا ۝

67. Those who, when they spend,  
Are not extravagant and not  
Niggardly, but hold a just (balance)  
Between those (extremes);<sup>3127</sup>

۞ وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا أَنفَقُوا لَمْ يُسْرِفُوا وَلَمْ  
يَقْتُرُوا وَكَانَ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ قَوَامًا ۝

68. Those who invoke not,  
With God, any other god,  
Nor slay such life as God  
Has made sacred, except  
For just cause, nor commit<sup>3128</sup>  
Fornication;—and any that does  
This (not only) meets punishment,

۞ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَدْعُونَ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ  
وَلَا يَقْتُلُونَ النَّفْسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ إِلَّا  
بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا يَزْنُونَ  
وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ يَلْقَ أَثَامًا ۝

3124. Humble prayer brings them nearer to God.

3125. This is a prayer of humility: such a person relies, not on any good works which he may have done, but on the Grace and Mercy of God; and he shows a lively sense of the Day of Judgment, when every action will weigh for or against a soul.

3126. The misery which results from sin is not only grievous to live in ("an abode") but also grievous "to rest in" or "to stand in", if it be only for a short time.

3127. In ordinary spending this is a wise rule. But even in charity, in which we give of our best, it is not expected that we should be extravagant, *i.e.*, that we should either do it for show, to impress other people, or do it thoughtlessly, which would be the case if we "rob Peter to pay Paul". We should certainly not be niggardly, but we should remember everyone's rights, including our own, and strike a perfectly just balance between them.

3128. Here three things are expressly condemned: (1) false worship, which is a crime against God; (2) the taking of life, which is a crime against our fellow-creatures; and (3) fornication, which is a crime against our self-respect, against ourselves. Every crime is against God, His creatures, and ourselves, but some may be viewed more in relation to one than to another. The prohibition against taking life is qualified: "except for just cause": *e.g.*, in judicial punishment for murder, or in self-preservation, which may include not only self-defence in the legal sense, but also the clearing out of pests, and the provision of meat under conditions of *Halāl*: see n. 698 to v. 5. After this comes a long parenthesis, which ends with verse 71 below.

69. (But) the Penalty on the Day  
Of Judgment will be doubled  
To him, and he will dwell  
Therein in ignominy,—<sup>3129</sup>

٤٩- يُضَاعَفُ لَهُ الْعَذَابُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ  
وَيُجْلَدُ فِيهِ مَهَانًا ۝

70. Unless he repents, believes,  
And works righteous deeds,  
For God will change  
The evil of such persons  
Into good, and God is  
Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful,<sup>3130</sup>

٥٠- إِلَّا مَنْ تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ عَمَلًا  
صَالِحًا فَأُولَٰئِكَ يُبَدِّلُ اللَّهُ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ  
حَسَنَاتٍ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا ۝

71. And whoever repents and does good  
Has truly turned to God  
With an (acceptable) conversion;—

٥١- وَمَنْ تَابَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا  
فَأِنَّهُ يُتَوَبُّ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَتَابًا ۝

72. Those who witness no falsehood,<sup>3131</sup>  
And, if they pass by futility,<sup>3132</sup>  
They pass by it  
With honourable (avoidance);

٥٢- وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَشْهَدُونَ الزُّورَ  
وَلَإِذَا امْرَأُوهَا بِالْغَوِّ مَرُّوا كِرَامًا ۝

73. Those who, when they are  
Admonished with the Signs  
Of their Lord, droop not down<sup>3133</sup>  
At them as if they were  
Deaf or blind;

٥٣- وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِّرُوا بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ  
لَمْ يَحْجُرُوا عَلَيْهَا صُغًا وَعُمْيًا ۝

74. And those who pray,  
“Our Lord! Grant unto us  
Wives and offspring who will be  
The comfort of our eyes,<sup>3134</sup>

٥٤- وَالَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا هَبْ لَنَا  
مِنْ أَزْوَاجِنَا وَذُرِّيَّاتِنَا قُرَّةَ أَعْيُنٍ

3129. The three crimes just mentioned are specially detestable and infamous, and as ignominy will be added to other punishments, the penalty will be double that of ordinary punishment.

3130. But even in the case of great crimes, if there is true repentance as tested by a changed life in conduct, God's Mercy is available, and it will transform the repentant's nature from evil to good.

3131. *Witness no falsehood* has two significations, both implied in this passage: (1) those who give no evidence that is false; and (2) those who do not assist at anything which implies fraud or falsehood.

3132. There is not only condemnation of positive falsehood or of being mixed up with things implying falsehood; but futilities—vain random talk, unedifying jokes, useless show, etc.—are all condemned. If a good man finds himself in such an affair, he must withdraw from it in an honourable, dignified way, not in a fussy arrogant way.

3133. *Kharra* may mean: to fall down, to snore, to droop down as if the person were bored or inattentive, or did not wish to see or hear or pay attention.

3134. We must also pray for the maintenance of God's Law after us, through our wives and descendants: in our eyes they should not be mere accidents or play-things, but a real comfort and fulfilment of our spiritual longings. Perhaps, through them, as well through ourselves, we may, by God's grace, be able to give a lead for truth and righteousness.

And give us (the grace)  
To lead the righteous.<sup>3135</sup>

75. Those are the ones who  
Will be rewarded with  
The highest place in heaven,  
Because of their patient constancy:  
Therein shall they be met  
With salutations and peace,

76. Dwelling therein;—how beautiful  
An abode and place of rest!

77. Say (to the Rejecters):  
"My Lord is not uneasy  
Because of you if ye call not on  
Him:<sup>3136</sup>  
But ye have indeed rejected  
(Him), and soon will come  
The inevitable (punishment)!"

وَجْعَلْنَا الْمُتَّقِينَ إِمَامًا ۝

۷۵- أُولَٰئِكَ يُجْزَوْنَ  
الْغُرُفَةَ بِمَا صَبَرُوا  
وَيُلَاقَوْنَ فِيهَا نِسَاءً يُحِبُّهُنَّ وَوَسْلَامًا ۝

۷۶- خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَحْسَنَتْ مُمْسِكَةً أَوْ مَقَامًا ۝

۷۷- قُلْ مَا يَعْزُبُ عَنْ رَبِّي  
لَوْلَا دُعَاؤُكُمْ  
فَقَدْ كَذَّبْتُمْ فَسَوْفَ يَكُونُ لِزَامًا ۝



3135. Let us recapitulate the virtues of the true servants of God: (1) they are humble and forbearing to those below them in spiritual worth; (2) they are constantly, by adoration, in touch with God; (3) they always remember the Judgment in the Hereafter; (4) they are moderate in all things; (5) they avoid treason to God, to their fellow-creatures, and to themselves; (6) they give a wide berth not only to falsehood but to futility; (7) they pay attention, both in mind and manner, to the Signs of their Lord; (8) their ambition is to bring up their families in righteousness and to lead in all good. A fine code of individual and social ethics, a ladder of spiritual development, open to all.

3136. Let not the wicked think that it causes God any annoyance or uneasiness if they do not serve or worship Him. He is high above all needs. But He turns in His Mercy to all who call on Him. For those who arrogantly reject Him, the spiritual consequences (the Hell of spiritual misery and degradation) are inevitable, and must soon come to pass.

INTRODUCTION TO SŪRA XXVI (*Shu'arāa*).

This Sūra begins a new series of four Sūras (xxvi-xxix), which illustrate the contrast between the spirit of Prophecy and spiritual Light and the reactions to it in the communities among whom it appeared, by going back to old Prophets and the stories of the Past, as explained in the Introduction to S. xvii.

In this particular Sūra we have the story of Moses in his fight with Pharaoh and of Pharaoh's discomfiture. Other Prophets mentioned are Abraham, Noah, Hūd, Ṣāliḥ, Lūṭ, and Shu'aib. The lesson is drawn that the Qur-ān is a continuation and fulfilment of previous Revelations, and is pure Truth, unlike the poetry of vain poets.

Chronologically the Sūra belongs to the middle Meccan period, when the contact of the Light of Prophecy with the milieu of Pagan Mecca was testing the Meccans in their most arrogant mood.

*Summary.*

The conflict of Unbelief with Truth is vain : so was the conflict of Pharaoh with Moses : Pharaoh's magicians bowed to the Truth, and Pharaoh and his host were drowned (xxvi. 1-69, and C. 164.)

Nor did Abraham's people gain anything by their resisting the Truth he preached, and Noah's people perished by their Unbelief (xxvi. 70-122, and C. 165).

Hūd warned his people against reliance on their material strength, and Ṣāliḥ against sacrilege, but in both cases the evil ones were brought low (xxvi. 123-159, and C. 166).

Lūṭ had to deal with unspeakable crimes, and Shu'aib against dishonest dealings and mischief ; their teaching was rejected, but the rejecters were wiped out (xxvi. 160-191, and C. 167).

So, when the spirit of Prophecy came to Mecca, it was resisted by the votaries of Evil : but Truth is not like vain poetry, and must triumph at last (xxvi. 192-277, and C. 168).

C. 164.—God's Plan works unceasingly : His Light  
(xxvi. 1-69) Shines none the less brightly, because some  
Reject it or mock at it. Moses was freed  
From all fear when God gave him His Signs  
And sent him to Pharaoh : he boldly  
Proclaimed the Message, and won the wise ones  
Of Egypt : the rejecters, with Pharaoh, perished,  
And their heritage passed to worthier hands.

## Sūra XXVI.

Shu'arāa, or The Poets.

In the name of God, Most Gracious,  
Most Merciful.

1. *Ala. Sin. Mim.*<sup>3137</sup>2. These are Verses of the Book  
That makes (things) clear.<sup>3138</sup>3. *Et* may be thou frettest  
Thy soul with grief, that they<sup>3139</sup>  
Do not become Believers.4. If (such) were Our Will,<sup>3140</sup>  
We could send down to them  
From the sky a Sign,  
To which they would bend  
Their necks in humility.5. But there comes not  
To them a newly-revealed  
Message from (God) Most Gracious,  
But they turn away therefrom.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

١- طسّر ○

٢- تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ ○

٣- لَعَلَّكَ بِأَخْرَجَ نَفْسَكَ

أَلَّا يَكُونُوا مُؤْمِنِينَ ○

٤- إِنْ تَشَاءْ نَنْزِلْ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ السَّمَاءِ آيَةً

فَظَلَّتْ أَعْنَاقُهُمْ لَهَا خَاضِعِينَ ○

٥- وَهَؤُلَاءِ يَتَزَيَّرُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مِنَ الرَّحْمَنِ

مُحَذِّرِينَ ○ إِلَّا كَانُوا عَنْهُمْ مُعْرِضِينَ ○

3137. This is a combination of three Abbreviated Letters, as to which, generally, see Appendix I, printed at the end of S. ii. This particular combination occurs here and at the head of S. xxviii, while the intervening Sūra xxvii has it in the syncopated form *Tā. Sīn*. None of the explanatory conjectures which I have seen carries conviction to me. If the letters stand for *Tur-i-Sīnān* (Mount Sinai) and *Mūsā* (Moses), whose story fills a large part of this Sūra why is the letter *Mīm* omitted in S. xxvii, where the same meaning would apply? There is, however, one fact to which I should like to draw attention. There are eleven Sections in this Sūra, and eight of them end with the word *Rahīm* (with the final *Mīm*). The three exceptions are sections 2 and 3, and section 11. But sections 2 and 3 are part of the story of Moses, which is completed in section 4, and that ends with "*Rahīm*". The main argument in section 11 ends at verse 217, which ends with *Rahīm*. We can say that the whole Sūra is based on a refrain ending in the word "*Rahīm*". Whether this has any bearing on our present enquiry I cannot say. My own position is that where we have material, we should pursue our researches, but we should never be dogmatic in such matters, as some Mysteries can never be solved by mere research.

3138. Cf. v. 17, and n. 716. The comparison of God's revelation with Light is continued.

3139. "They" are the Pagans of Mecca. From a human point of view it was a great disappointment to God's Apostle in the middle period of his Meccan ministry that the Meccans could not be brought to believe in the Truth.

3140. If it had been God's Will and Plan to force people's will, He could quite easily have forced the Meccans. But His Will and Plan work differently. His revelation is meant to train man's own will so that it conforms to God's beneficent purpose.

6. They have indeed rejected  
(The Message): so they will  
know soon (enough) the truth  
Of what they mocked at! <sup>3141</sup>

فَعَدَّ كَذِبًا  
فَسَيَاتِيهِمْ أَتَبَوْا مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ

7. Do they not look  
At the earth,—how many  
Noble things of all kinds  
We have produced therein? <sup>3142</sup>

أَوَلَمْ يَنْظُرُوا إِلَى الْأَرْضِ  
كَمَا أَكْمَلْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ كَرِيمٍ

8. Verily, in this is a Sign:  
But most of them  
Do not believe.

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً  
وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

9. And verily, thy Lord  
Is He, the Exalted in Might, <sup>3143</sup>  
Most Merciful.

وَلَمَّا رَّبَّكَ  
لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ

## SECTION 2.

10. Behold, thy Lord called <sup>3144</sup>  
Moses: "Go to the people  
Of iniquity,—

وَرَأَى نَادَى رَبِّكَ مُوسَى  
أَنْ أَنْتَ الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ

11. "The people of Pharaoh:  
Will they not fear God?"

أَلَا يَتَّقُونَ

12. He said: "O my Lord!  
I do fear that they  
Will charge me with falsehood:

قَالَ رَبِّ  
لِي أَخَافُ أَنْ يُكَلِّبُونِي

3141. They may laugh at God's Message of righteousness, but they will soon see the power of Truth and realise the real significance of the movement which they opposed. Where were the Pagans of Mecca after Badr, and still more, after the bloodless surrender of Mecca? And the meaning may be applied universally in all history.

3142. If evil has a little run in this life, let them not run away with the notion that the world is for evil. They have only to look round at the physical and moral world around them, and they would be undeceived. But they are blind and without the Faith (the Light) which would open their eyes.

3143. One Who is able to carry out all His Will and Plans. See n. 2818 to xxii. 40.

3144. The part of the story of Moses told here is how Moses felt diffident about undertaking his commission; how God reassured him; how he went to Pharaoh with "the Signs"; how Pharaoh and his people rejected him; how their blasphemy recoiled on themselves, but the cause of God triumphed; in other words the point here is the reaction of a wicked people to the Light that was held up to them, considered in its relation to the mind of God's Messenger.

13. "My breast will be straitened,<sup>3145</sup>  
And my speech may not go  
(Smoothly): so send unto Aaron.

١٣- وَيَضِيقُ صَدْرِي وَلَا يَنْطَلِقُ لِسَايَ  
فَاَرْسِلْ اِلَيَّ هَارُونَ ۝

14. "And (further), they have  
A charge of crime against me;<sup>3146</sup>  
And I fear they may  
Slay me."

١٤- وَلَهُمْ عَلَيَّ ذَنْبٌ  
فَاَخَافُ اَنْ يُقْتُلُوْنِ ۝

15. God said: "By no means!  
Proceed then, both of you,  
With Our Signs; We  
Are with you, and will  
Listen (to your call).

١٥- قَالَ كَلَّا ۚ فَاذْهَبَا بِآيَاتِنَا  
اِنَّا مَعَكُمْ مُسْتَمِعُوْنَ ۝

16. "So go forth, both of you,  
To Pharaoh, and say:  
'We have been sent  
By the Lord and Cherisher  
Of the Worlds;

١٦- فَاتَيْنَا فِرْعَوْنَ فَقَوْلَا  
اِنَّا رُسُلُ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِيْنَ ۝

17. "'Send thou with us  
The Children of Israel.'"

١٧- اَنْ اَرْسِلَ مَعَنَا بَنِي إِسْرَءِيْلَ ۝

18. (Pharaoh) said: "Did we not<sup>3147</sup>  
Cherish thee as a child  
Among us, and didst thou not  
Stay in our midst  
Many years of thy life?

١٨- قَالَ اَلَمْ نُزَكِّكَ فِينَا وَلَدًا  
وَاَكْمَلْتْ فِينَا مِنْ عُمُرِكَ سِنِيْنَ ۝

3145. As we should say in English, "My heart would fail me, and my tongue cleave to my mouth." Moses had an impediment in his speech, and his mission was risky: see next note. But God's Plan works in wondrous ways. Aaron was given to assist him in his mission, and Moses's shortcomings were transformed by God's grace into power, so that he became the most powerful leader of Israel.

3146. Moses was brought up in the palace of Pharaoh, as narrated in his personal story in xx 39-40 and n. 2563. When he was grown-up he saw an Egyptian smiting an Israelite, and as the Israelites were being generally oppressed by the Egyptians, Moses's anger was roused, and he slew the Egyptian. He then fled to the Midianite country in the Sinai peninsula, where he received the divine commission. But the charge of slaying the Egyptian was hanging against him. He was also apparently quick-tempered. But God's grace cured his temper and he became wise; his impediment in speech, for he stood up boldly to speak to Pharaoh; and his fear, for he dared the Egyptians with God's Signs, and they were afraid of him.

3147. There is here a little play of wit on the part of Pharaoh. When Moses speaks of the "Lord and Cherisher of the Worlds", Pharaoh says: "Who cherished you? Did we not bring you up as a child? Did you not grow up among us?" By implication Pharaoh suggests that he is the cherisher of Moses, and in any case Pharaoh laid claim to godhead himself.

19. "And thou didst a deed  
Of thine which (thou knowest) <sup>3148</sup>  
Thou didst, and thou art  
An ungrateful (wretch)!"

١٩- وَفَعَلْتَ فَعَلْتِكَ الَّتِي فَعَلْتَ  
وَأَنْتَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ ٥

20. Moses said: "I did it  
Then, when I was  
In error. <sup>3149</sup>

٢٠- قَالَ فَعَلْتُهَا

21. "So I fled from you (all)  
When I feared you; <sup>3150</sup>  
But my Lord has (since)  
Invested me with judgment  
(And wisdom) and appointed me  
As one of the apostles.

إِذَا وَأَنَا مِنَ الضَّالِّينَ ٥  
٢١- فَفَرَرْتُ مِنْكُمْ لَمَّا خِفْتُكُمْ  
فَوَهَبَ لِي رَبِّي حُكْمًا  
وَجَعَلَنِي مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ٥

22. "And this is the favour <sup>3151</sup>  
With which thou dost  
Reproach me,—that thou  
Hast enslaved the Children  
Of Israel!"

٢٢- وَتِلْكَ نِعْمَةٌ تَمُنُّهَا عَلَيَّ  
أَنْ عَبْدْتُكَ بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ ٥

23. Pharaoh said: "And what  
Is the 'Lord and Cherisher  
Of the Worlds'?" <sup>3152</sup>

٢٣- قَالَ دُعُونَ وَمَا رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ ٥

3148. Further, Pharaoh reminds Moses of his having slain the Egyptian, and taunts him: "You are not only a murderer: you are an ungrateful wretch" (using *kāfir* again in a double sense) "to have killed one of the race that brought you up!"

3149. What is Moses's reply? He is no longer afraid. He tells the whole truth, extenuating nothing in his own favour. "Yes I did it: but I did it under an error." There are three implications in this: "(1) I was wrong in doing it in a temper and in being hasty; (2) I was wrong in taking the law into my own hands, but I repented, and asked for God's pardon (xxviii. 15-16); (3) that was at a time when I was under your influence, but since then I am a changed man, as God has called me."

3150. He accounts for all his movements, much more than Pharaoh had asked for. He has nothing to hide. At that time he was under the influence of fear, and he had fled from him. Now he is serving God, the Lord of the Worlds. He has no fear: he is an apostle.

3151. Pharaoh had called Moses ungrateful and reproached him with all the favours which Moses had received from the Egyptians. "What favours?" he says; "Do you count it also as a favour to me that you have enslaved my brethren the Children of Israel?" Moses was now speaking as a man of God, not as an individual. Any individual favours he may have received were blotted out by the oppression of his people.

3152. Moses having eliminated all personalities, the argument now comes up to the highest plane of all,—the nature of God and His mercies. Moses had put forward this before, as implied in verse 16 above, but Pharaoh had twisted it into personalities. Now we come back to the real issue. It may have been in the same sitting, or it may have been in a later sitting



24. (Moses) said: "The Lord  
And Cherisher of the heavens  
And the earth, and all between,—  
If ye want to be  
Quite sure."

25. (Pharaoh) said to those  
Around: "Do ye not listen  
(To what he says) ?" <sup>3153</sup>

26. (Moses) said: "Your Lord  
And the Lord of your fathers  
From the beginning!"

27. (Pharaoh) said: "Truly  
Your apostle who has been  
Sent to you is  
A veritable madman!" <sup>3154</sup>

28. (Moses) said: "Lord of the East  
And the West, and all between!  
If ye only had sense!"

29. (Pharaoh) said: "If thou  
Dost put forward any god  
Other than me, I will  
Certainly put thee in prison!" <sup>3155</sup>

30. (Moses) said: "Even if I  
Showed you something  
Clear (and) convincing?" <sup>3156</sup>

٢٤- قَالَ رَبُّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَمَا  
بَيْنَهُمَا  
اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ

٢٥- قَالَ لِمَنْ حَوْلَهُ اَلَا تَسْمَعُوْنَ

٢٦- قَالَ رَبُّكُمْ وَرَبُّ اٰبَائِكُمُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ

٢٧- قَالَ اِنْ رَّسُوْلُكُمْ الَّذِيْ  
اُرْسِلَ اِلَيْكُمْ لَمَجْنُوْنٌ

٢٨- قَالَ رَبُّ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَمَا  
بَيْنَهُمَا اِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْقِلُوْنَ

٢٩- قَالَ لِمَنْ اَتَّخَذَتِ الْاِلٰهَ غَيْرِيْ  
اَلْجَعَلْتُكَ مِنَ الْمَسْجُوْنِيْنَ

٣٠- قَالَ اَوْ لَوْ جِئْتُكَ بِشَيْءٍ مُّؤْمِنٍ

3153. Moses had stirred up the wrath of Pharaoh both by putting forward the name of the One True God as against Pharaoh's pretended godhead, and by suggesting that any man of judgment would understand God's majesty. While Pharaoh turns to his people in indignation, Moses drives the nail in further: "He is the God of the heavens and the earth and all between: therefore He is also your God, and the God of your fathers from the beginning. Any other pretensions are false!"

3154. Pharaoh is further perturbed. In reply to Moses's statement that the One True God is also the God of the Egyptians and of Pharaoh also, Pharaoh says sarcastically to his Court: "Look at this 'apostle' of yours; he seems to be mad!" But Moses is not abashed. He boldly says what is the truth: "It is you who are mad! The God Whom I preach is the universal Lord,—of the East and of the West. He reigns wherever you go!"

3155. Now we come to the crisis. Pharaoh threatens Moses with prison for treason. Moses remains calm and still argues: "What if I show you a miracle? Will it convince you that I am not mad, and that I have behind me the Lord of all the Worlds?"

3156. The Egyptians were addicted to magic and sorcery, which was mostly false. If a true miracle were shown to them, would they believe? Perhaps they would see the hollowness of their own magic. In fact this actually happened with the Egyptian sorcerers themselves and perhaps with the commonalty. But Pharaoh and his Court were too arrogant, and battered too much on frauds to yield to Truth.

31. (Pharaoh) said: "Show it then,  
If thou tellest the truth!"

32. So (Moses) threw his rod,  
And behold, it was  
A serpent, plain (for all to see)!

33. And he drew out his hand,  
And behold, it was white  
To all beholders!<sup>3157</sup>

### SECTION 3.

34. (Pharaoh) said to the Chiefs<sup>3158</sup>  
Around him: "This is indeed  
A sorcerer well-versed:

35. "His plan is to get you out  
Of your land by his sorcery;  
Then what is it ye counsel?"

36. They said: "Keep him  
And his brother in suspense  
(For a while), and dispatch  
To the Cities heralds to collect—

37. "And bring up to thee  
All (our) sorcerers well-versed."

38. So the sorcerers were got  
Together for the appointment  
Of a day well-known,<sup>3159</sup>

39. And the people were told:  
"Are ye (now) assembled?"—

40. "That we may follow"<sup>3160</sup>  
The sorcerers (in religion)  
If they win?"

٣١- قَالَ فَأْتِ بِهِ إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ

٣٢- فَأَلْقَى عَصَاهُ فَإِذَا هِيَ ثُعْبَانٌ مُّبِينٌ

٣٣- وَنَزَعَ يَدَهُ فَإِذَا هِيَ بَيْضَاءُ  
لِلنَّٰظِرِيْنَ ۝

٣٤- قَالَ لِلْمَلَاحِظَةِ  
إِنَّ هَٰذَا سَاحِرٌ عَلِيْمٌ ۝

٣٥- يُرِيدُ أَنْ يُخْرِجَكُمْ مِنْ أَرْضِكُمْ  
بِسِحْرِهِ ۖ فَمَاذَا تَأْمُرُوْنَ ۝

٣٦- قَالُوا أَرْجِهْ وَأَخَاهُ  
وَابْعَثْ فِي الْمَدَائِنِ حٰشِرِيْنَ ۝

٣٧- يَا أَيُّوْكَ بِكُلِّ سَاحِرٍ عَلِيْمٍ ۝

٣٨- فَجُمِعَ السَّحَرَةُ لِمِيقَاتِ يَوْمٍ مَّعْلُوْمٍ ۝

٣٩- وَذُكِّرَ لِلنَّاسِ هَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُّجْتَمِعُوْنَ ۝

٤٠- لَعَلَّنَا نَتَّبِعُ السَّحَرَةَ  
إِنْ كَانُوا هُمُ الْغٰلِبِيْنَ ۝

3157. Cf. vii 107-8. See the whole passage there, and the notes thereon.

3158. In vii. 109 it is the Chiefs who say this. The fact is that it was a general consultation, and this was the general feeling, expressed in words by each to the others.

3159. A day well-known: a solemn day of festival: see xx. 59. The object was to get together as large a concourse of people as possible. It was confidently expected that the Egyptian sorcerers with all their organisation would win with their tricks against these amateur Israelites, and so the State cult of the worship of Pharaoh would be fastened on the necks of the people more firmly than ever.

3160. See the last note. The people are to come and witness the triumph of the State religion, so that they may become the more obedient to Pharaoh and more compliant with the demands of the priests. The State religion included magic and the worship of Pharaoh.

41. So when the sorcerers arrived,  
They said to Pharaoh:  
"Of course—shall we have  
A (suitable) reward<sup>3161</sup>  
If we win?"
42. He said: "Yea, (and more),—  
For ye shall in that case  
Be (raised to posts)  
Nearest (to my person)."
43. Moses said to them:  
"Throw ye—that which  
Ye are about to throw!"<sup>3162</sup>
44. So they threw their ropes  
And their rods, and said:  
"By the might of Pharaoh,  
It is we who will  
Certainly win!"<sup>3163</sup>
45. Then Moses threw his rod,  
When, behold, it straightway  
Swallows up all  
The falsehoods which they fake!<sup>3164</sup>
46. Then did the sorcerers  
Fall down, prostrate in adoration,
47. Saying: "We believe  
In the Lord of the Worlds,
48. The Lord of Moses and Aaron."

٣١- فَلَمَّا جَاءَ السَّحَرَةُ قَالُوا لِفِرْعَوْنَ  
أَيْنَ لَنَا أَكْبَرُ  
إِنْ كُنَّا نَحْنُ الْغَالِبِينَ ○

٣٢- قَالَ نَعَمْ وَإِنَّكُمْ إِذَا  
لِئِنِ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ ○

٣٣- قَالَ لَهُمْ مُوسَى الْقُوا مَا أَنْتُمْ تُلْقُونَ ○

٣٤- فَأَلْقَوْا حَبَالَهُمْ وَعَصَاهُمْ وَقَالُوا  
يَعْتَرِكُ فِرْعَوْنُ إِنَّا لَنَحْنُ الْغَالِبُونَ ○

٣٥- فَأَلْقَى مُوسَى عَصَاهُ  
فَإِذَا هِيَ تَلْقَفُ مَا يَأْفِكُونَ ۖ

٣٦- فَأَلْقَى السَّحَرَةُ سِهْنَهُمْ ○

٣٧- قَالُوا أَمَّا رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ ○

٣٨- رَبِّ مُوسَى وَهَارُونَ ○

3161. There was no such thing as pure loyalty to an exploiting ruler like this Pharaoh. The sorcerers, who were probably also priests, were venal, and they hoped to establish their own hold on both king and people by the further enrichment of themselves and their order.

3162. The euphemism implies a taunt, as if Moses had said: "I know about your tricks! You pretend to throw ropes and rods, and make people believe they are snakes. But now come on!"

3163. Though Pharaoh claimed to be a god, it is not likely that those nearest to him—his priests and sorcerers believed such a thing! But it was a game of mutual pretence before the world. And so they appeal to his "divine" power.

3164. The sorcerers' ropes and rods seemed to have become serpents, but the rod of Moses was mightier than all of them and quickly swallowed them up. So Truth is more powerful than tricks and will expose and destroy them.

49. Said (Pharaoh): " Believe ye  
In Him before I give  
You permission? Surely he  
Is your leader, who has  
Taught you sorcery!  
But soon shall ye know! " <sup>3165</sup>

٤٩- قَالَ اٰمَنْتُمْ لَهٗ قَبْلَ اَنْ اُذِنَ لَكُمْ  
اِنَّكُمْ لَكٰبِرِيْكُمْ الَّذِي عَلَّمَكُمْ السِّحْرَ  
فَلَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ۝

50. " Be sure I will cut off  
Your hands and your feet  
On opposite sides, and I  
Will cause you all  
To die on the cross! "

٥٠- لَا اَقْطَعَنَّ اَيْدِيَكُمْ وَاَرْجُلَكُمْ  
مِّنْ خِلَافٍ وَّاَكْرُؤُصِبِّيْكُمْ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ۝

51. They said: " No matter!  
For us, we shall but  
Return to our Lord!

٥١- قَالُوْا لَا ضَرِيْرَ  
اِنَّا اِلٰى رَبِّنَا مُنْقَلِبُوْنَ ۝

52. " Only, our desire is  
That our Lord will  
Forgive us our faults,  
That we may become  
Foremost among the Believers! " <sup>3166</sup>

٥٢- اِنَّا نَظْمُرُ اَنْ يَّغْفِرَ لَنَا رَبُّنَا خَطِيْئَتَنَا  
اَنْ كُنَّا اَوَّلَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ۝

#### SECTION 4.

53. By inspiration We told Moses:  
" Travel by night with  
My servants; for surely  
Ye shall be pursued." <sup>3167</sup>

٥٣- وَاَوْحَيْنَا اِلٰى مُّوْسٰى اَنْ اَسْرِ  
بِعِبَادِيَ اِنَّكُمْ مُّتَّبَعُوْنَ ۝

54. Then Pharaoh sent heralds  
To (all) the Cities,

٥٤- فَارْسَلْ فِرْعَوْنُ فِى الْمَدَآئِنِ الْحَرِيْرِيْنَ ۝

3165. The sorcerers knew that they had met something very different from their tricks. God's spirit worked on them, and they professed the True God. As they represented the intelligence of the community, it may be presumed that they carried the intelligence of Egypt with them and perhaps some of the commonalty, who were impressed by the dramatic scene! Hence Pharaoh's anger, but it is the beginning of his decline!

3166. This is the core of the lesson enforced in this passage. What was the reaction of the environment to the Light or Message of God? (1) It transformed Moses so that he became a fearless leader, one of the foremost in Faith. (2) From men like Pharaoh and his corrupt court, it called forth obstinacy, spite, and all the tricks and snares of Evil, but Evil was defeated on its own ground. (3) The very dupes of Evil were touched by the glorious Light of God, and they were ready to suffer tortures and death, their sole ambition (in their transformed state) being to be foremost in Faith!

3167. The rest of the story —of the plagues of Egypt—is passed over as not germane to the present argument. We come now to the story of Israel leaving Egypt, pursued by Pharaoh. Here again there are three contrasts: (1) the blind arrogance of the Egyptians, against the development of God's Plan; (2) the Faith of Moses, against the fears of his people; and (3) the final deliverance of the seed of righteousness, against the destruction of the hosts of brute force.

55. (Saying) : " These (Israelites)  
Are but a small band,

56. " And they are raging  
Furiously against us ;

57. " But we are a multitude  
Amplly fore-warned."

58. ~~So~~ We expelled them <sup>3168</sup>  
From gardens, springs,

59. Treasures, and every kind  
Of honourable position ;

60. Thus it was, but  
We made the Children  
Of Israel inheritors <sup>3169</sup>  
Of such things.

61. ~~So~~ they pursued them <sup>3170</sup>  
At sunrise.

62. And when the two bodies  
Saw each other, the people  
Of Moses said : " We are  
Sure to be overtaken."

63. (Moses) said : " By no means !  
My Lord is with me !  
Soon will He guide me ! " <sup>3171</sup>

٥٥- إِنَّ هَؤُلَاءِ لَكِرْزَمَةٌ قَلِيلُونَ ۝

٥٦- وَإِنَّهُمْ لَنَا لَغَائِظُونَ ۝

٥٧- وَإِنَّا لَجَمِيْعٌ خَدِرُونَ ۝

٥٨- فَأَخْرَجْنَاهُمْ مِنْ جُلَّتٍ وَعَيْنُونَ ۝

٥٩- وَكُنُوزٍ وَمَقَامٍ كَرِيمٍ ۝

٦٠- كَذَلِكَ ۝

وَأَوْزَيْنَاهُم بِغَنَىٰ إِسْرَءِيلَ ۝

٦١- فَأَتَبَعُوهُمْ مُشْرِقِينَ ۝

٦٢- فَلَمَّا تَرَاءَ الْجَمْعَيْنِ

قَالَ أَصْحَابُ مُوسَىٰ إِنَّا لَمُدْرَكُونَ ۝

٦٣- قَالَ كَلَّا إِنَّ مَعِيَ رَبِّي سَيَهْدِينِ ۝

3168. In deference to almost unanimous authority I have translated this passage (verses 58-60) as if it were a parenthetical statement of God's purpose. Personally I prefer another construction. According to that, verses 58-59 will be part of Pharaoh's proclamation : " We have dispossessed the Israelites from everything good in the land, and made them our slaves " ; and verse 60 only will be parenthetical : " Poor ignorant men ! you may oppress those who are helpless, but We (i.e., God) have decreed that they shall inherit all these things ", as they certainly did (for a time) in the Land of Promise, Palestine.

3169. The Children of Israel certainly inherited the gardens, springs, treasures, and honourable positions in Palestine after many years' wanderings in the wilderness. But when they were false to God, they lost them again, and another people (the Muslims) inherited them when they were true in Faith. These latter not only inherited Palestine but also Egypt, and the old Pharaonic power and institutions were lost for ever. " Of such things " : literally, " of them ".

3170 The story is here resumed after the parenthesis of verses 58-60.

3171. *Guide me* : i.e., show me some way of escape from danger. This actually happened, for Pharaoh's host was drowned. The faith of Moses stands in strong contrast to the fears of his people.

64. Then We told Moses  
By inspiration : " Strike  
The sea with thy rod."  
So it divided, and each  
Separate part became  
Like the huge, firm mass  
Of a mountain.

65. And We made the other  
Party approach thither.<sup>3172</sup>

66. We delivered Moses and all  
Who were with him ;

67. But We drowned the others.

68. Verily in this is a Sign :  
But most of them  
Do not believe.<sup>3173</sup>

69. And verily thy Lord  
Is He, the Exalted in Might,  
Most Merciful.<sup>3174</sup>

٦٣- فَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ أَنِ اضْرِبْ  
بِعَصَاكَ الْبَحْرَ  
فَانْفَلَقَ فَكَانَ كُلُّ فَرَقٍ  
كَالْكَوْدِ الْعَظِيمِ ۝

٦٤- وَأَزَلَّوْنَا تَمَرًا الْأُخْرَيْنَ ۝

٦٥- وَأَنْجَيْنَا مُوسَىٰ وَمَنْ مَعَهُ أَجْمَعِينَ ۝

٦٦- ثُمَّ أَغْرَقْنَا الْأُخْرَيْنَ ۝

٦٨- إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً  
وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُّؤْمِنِينَ ۝

٦٩- وَلَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ ۝

C. 165.—Abraham patiently argued with his people  
(xxvi. 70-122.) About God's Truth ; prayed for wisdom  
And righteousness, for himself, his father,  
And future generations ; and taught Truth  
About the Hereafter. Noah preached  
To a world of Unfaith, and would not reject  
The humble and lowly : his arrogant rejecters  
Were brought low : in him and his following  
Were vindicated God's righteous Purpose and Mercy.

#### SECTION 5.

70. And rehearse to them  
(Something of) Abraham's story.<sup>3175</sup>

٤٠- وَإِذْ نَادَىٰ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ رَبَّهُ ۝

3172. The miracle was twofold : (1) Moses with his people passed safely through the sea ; and  
(2) Pharaoh and his great host were drowned in the sea.

3173. As it was then, so it is now. In spite of the obvious Signs of God, people who are blind in  
their obstinate resistance to Truth accomplish their own destruction, while humble, persecuted men  
of Faith are transformed by the Light of God, and obtain salvation.

3174. Nothing that the powers of Evil can do, will ever defeat the merciful Purpose of God. Evil,  
in resisting good, will effect its own destruction.

3175. For the argument of this Sūra the incidents in Abraham's life are not relevant and are not  
mentioned. What is mentioned is : (1) the steps by which he taught about the sin of false worship, in  
the form of a Dialogue ; (2) the aims of a righteous man not only in his individual life, but for his  
ancestors and posterity, in the form of a Prayer ; and (3) a picture of the Future Judgment, in the  
form of a vision. (1) is covered by verses 70-82 ; (2) by 83-87 ; and (3) by 88-102.

71. Behold, he said  
To his father and his people :  
"What worship ye?"

72. They said : "We worship  
Idols, and we remain constantly<sup>3176</sup>  
In attendance on them."

73. He said : "Do they listen  
To you when ye call (on them),  
Or do you good or harm?"

74. They said : "Nay, but we  
Found our fathers doing  
Thus (what we do)."

75. He said : "Do ye then  
See whom ye have been  
Worshipping,—

76. "Ye and your fathers before you?—

77. "For they are enemies to me;<sup>3177</sup>  
Not so the Lord and Cherisher  
Of the Worlds;

78. "Who created me, and  
It is He who guides me;

79. "Who gives me food and drink,

80. "And when I am ill,  
It is He who cures me;

81. "Who will cause me to die,  
And then to live (again);

٤١- اِذْ قَالَ لِاٰكِبِيْهِ وَقَوْمِهٖ مَا تَعْبُدُوْنَ

٤٢- قَالُوْا نَعْبُدُ اَصْنَامًا مَّا تَنْظُرُ لَهَا  
عَكْفُوْنِ

٤٣- قَالَ هَلْ يَسْمَعُوْنَكُمْ اِذْ تَدْعُوْنَ  
اَوْ يَنْفَعُوْنَكُمْ اَوْ يَضُرُّوْنَ

٤٤- قَالُوْا بَلْ وَجَدْنَا اٰبَاءَنَا كَذٰلِكَ  
يَفْعَلُوْنَ

٤٥- قَالَ اَفَرَبِّكُمْ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْبُدُوْنَ

٤٦- اَنْتُمْ وَاٰبَاؤُكُمْ الْاَقْدَمُوْنَ

٤٧- قَالَتْهُمْ عَدُوِّيْٓ اِلَّا رَبُّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ

٤٨- الَّذِيْ خَلَقَنِيْ فَهُوَ يُهْدِيْنِيْ

٤٩- وَالَّذِيْ هُوَ يُطْعِمُنِيْ وَيَسْقِيْنِيْ

٥٠- وَاِذَا مَرِضْتُ فَهُوَ يَشْفِيْنِيْ

٥١- وَالَّذِيْ يُمَيِّتُنِيْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيْنِيْ

3176. They want to show their true and assiduous devotion. But Abraham goes at once to the heart of the matter by asking: "To whom is your devotion paid? Is the object worthy of it?"

3177. 'The things that you worship are enemies to mankind: let me testify from my own personal experience: they are enemies to me: they can do me no good, but would lead me astray. Contrast with their impotence or their power of mischief the One True God Whom I worship: He created me and all the Worlds; He cherishes me and guides me; He takes care of me; and when I die, He will give me new life; He will forgive me and grant me final Salvation. Will you then come to this true worship? How can you doubt, after seeing the contrast of the one with the other? Is it not as the contrast between Light and Darkness?

82. "And who, I hope,  
Will forgive me my faults  
On the Day of Judgment...

۸۲- وَالَّذِي أَطْمَعُ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ لِي خَطِيئَتِي  
يَوْمَ الدِّينِ ۝

83. "O my Lord! bestow wisdom<sup>3178</sup>  
On me, and join me  
With the righteous;

۸۳- رَبِّ هَبْ لِي حِكْمًا وَاجْعَلْ لِي  
بِالضَّالِّينَ ۝

84. "Grant me honourable mention  
On the tongue of truth<sup>3179</sup>  
Among the latest (generations);

۸۴- وَاجْعَلْ لِي لِسَانَ صِدْقٍ فِي  
الْآخِرِينَ ۝

85. "Make me one of the inheritors  
Of the Garden of Bliss;

۸۵- وَاجْعَلْ لِي مِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي جَنَّةَ النَّوْمِ ۝

86. "Forgive my father, for that  
He is among those astray;

۸۶- وَاعْفُ رَأْيِي إِنَّهُ كَانَ مِنَ الضَّالِّينَ ۝

87. "And let me not be  
In disgrace on the Day  
When (men) will be raised up;—

۸۷- وَلَا تُخْزِنِي يَوْمَ يُبْعَثُونَ ۝

88. "On the Day whereon neither<sup>3180</sup>  
Wealth nor sons will avail,

۸۸- يَوْمَ لَا يَنْفَعُ مَالٌ وَلَا بَنُونَ ۝

89. "But only he (will prosper)  
That brings to God  
A sound heart;

۸۹- إِلَّا مَنْ آتَى اللَّهَ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ ۝

90. "To the righteous, the Garden<sup>3181</sup>  
Will be brought near,

۹۰- وَأُزْلِفَتِ الْجَنَّةُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ۝

3178. Having shown clearly the distinction between the False and the True, Abraham now shows in the form of a Prayer what his inmost wishes are. (1) He wants his own soul enlightened with divine wisdom, and (2) his heart and life filled with righteousness; (3) he will not be content with working for himself or his own generation; his view extends to all future generations; (4) and of course he wishes to attain the goal of the righteous, the Garden of the Bliss of the Divine Countenance; but he is not content with this; for (5) he wants his father and relatives to share in his spiritual joy, so that he can proudly see all whom he can reach, in an honourable station (contrasted with disgrace) on the Day of Judgment.

3179. Cf. xix. 50. The whole of the passage about Abraham there may be compared with this passage.

3180. Now we have a vision of the Day of Judgment. Nothing will then avail except a pure heart; all sorts of the so-called "good deeds" of this world, without the motive of purity, will be useless. The contrast of the Garden of Bliss with the Fire of Misery will be plainly visible. Evil will be shown in its true colours,—isolated, helpless, cursing and despairing; and all chances will then have been lost.

3181. The Good will only see good (the Garden of Bliss), and the Evil will only see evil (the Fire of Hell). The type of this contrast is shown to us in the world of our spiritual sense even in this life.



91. "And to those straying in Evil,  
The Fire will be placed  
In full view;      ٩١- وَبُورَاتِ الْجَحِيمِ لِلْغَاوِينَ ۝
92. "And it shall be said  
To them: 'Where are  
The (gods) ye worshipped—      ٩٢- وَقِيلَ لَهُمْ إِنَّمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْبُدُونَ
93. "' Besides God? Can they  
Help you or help themselves? '      ٩٣- مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ هَلْ يَنْصُرُوكُمْ أَوْ  
يَنْتَصِرُونَ ۝
94. "Then they will be thrown  
Headlong into the (Fire),—  
They and those straying<sup>3182</sup>  
In Evil,      ٩٤- فَكَبِكُوا فِيهَا  
هُمْ وَالْغَاوُونَ ۝
95. "And the whole hosts  
Of Iblis together.      ٩٥- وَجُنُودُ إِبْلِيسَ أَجْمَعُونَ ۝
96. "They will say there  
In their mutual bickerings:      ٩٦- قَالُوا وَهُمْ فِيهَا يَخْتَصِمُونَ ۝
97. "' By God, we were truly  
In an error manifest,<sup>3183</sup>      ٩٧- قَالُوا إِنَّ كُنَّا لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ ۝
98. "' When we held you as equals  
With the Lord of the Worlds;      ٩٨- وَإِذْ نُسَبِّحُكُمْ بِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ۝
99. "' And our seducers were  
Only those who were  
Steeped in guilt.<sup>3184</sup>      ٩٩- وَمَا أَصَلْنَا إِلَّا الْمُجْرِمُونَ ۝
100. "' Now, then, we have none  
To intercede (for us),      ١٠٠- فَمَا لَنَا مِنْ شَافِعِينَ ۝

3182. The false gods, being devils or personified false fancies, will be all involved in the punishment of Hell, together with their worshippers, and the ultimate sources of evil, the hosts of Iblis or Satan.

3183. *Error manifest*: 'our error is now plainly manifest, but it should have been manifest to us before it was too late, because the Signs of God were always around us'. This will be said by the ungodly, whose eyes will then be fully opened.

3184. They now see that the people who seduced them were themselves evil and subject to the penalties of evil, and their seductions were frauds. They feel that they ought to have seen it before. For who would deliberately follow the paths of those condemned to misery and punishment? How simple they were not to see the true character of their seducers, though they had been warned again and again against them! It was their own folly that made them accept such obviously false guidance!

101. "Nor a single friend  
To feel (for us).
102. "Now if we only had  
A chance of return,  
We shall truly be  
Of those who believe!"<sup>3185</sup>
103. Verily in this is a Sign  
But most of them  
Do not believe.
104. And verily thy Lord  
Is He, the Exalted in Might,  
Most Merciful.

## SECTION 6.

105. The people of Noah rejected  
The apostles.
106. Behold, their brother Noah<sup>3186</sup>  
Said to them: "Will ye not  
Fear (God)?"
107. "I am to you an apostle  
Worthy of all trust!"<sup>3187</sup>
108. "So fear God, and obey me.
109. "No reward do I ask  
Of you for it: my reward  
Is only from the Lord  
Of the Worlds:

١٠١- وَلَا صَدِيقَ جَمِيعٍ ۝

١٠٢- فَلَوْ أَنَّ لَنَا كَرَّةٌ  
فَنَكُونُ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ۝

١٠٣- إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً  
وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ۝

١٠٤- وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَكَلَّا الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ ۝

١٠٥- كَذَّبَتْ قَوْمُ نُوحٍ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ۝

١٠٦- إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ أَخُوهُمْ نُوحٌ أَلَا  
تَتَّقُونَ ۝

١٠٧- إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ ۝

١٠٨- فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا أَمْرًا ۝

١٠٩- وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ  
إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ۝

3185. This apparent longing for a chance of return is dishonest. If they were sent back, they would certainly return to their evil ways: vi. 27-28. Besides, they have had numerous chances already in this life, and they have used them for mischief or evil.

3186. Noah's generation had lost all faith and abandoned themselves to evil. They had rejected the Message of apostles previously sent to the world. Noah was sent to them as one of themselves ("their brother"). His life was open before them; he had proved himself pure in heart and conduct (like the holy Apostle of Arabia long after him), and worthy of every trust. Would they fear God and follow his advice? They could see that he had no ends of his own to serve. Would they not listen to him?

3187. *Amīn*=one to whom a trust has been given, with several shades of meaning implied: e.g. (1) worthy of trust, (2) bound to deliver his trust, as a prophet is bound to deliver his Message, (3) bound to act entirely as directed by the trust, as a prophet is bound to give only the Message of God, and not add anything of his own, and (4) not seeking any interest of his own.

110. "So fear God, and obey me."<sup>3188</sup>      ۞ قَالُوا لَوْلَا آتَاكَ اللَّهُ بَآيَاتٍ فَكَرِهْتَ ۞
111. They said: "Shall we  
Believe in thee when it is  
The meanest that follow thee?"<sup>3189</sup>      ۞ قَالُوا لَوْلَا آتَاكَ اللَّهُ بَآيَاتٍ فَكَرِهْتَ ۞
112. He said: "And what  
Do I know as to  
What they do?"      ۞ قَالُوا وَمَا عَلَيْنَا مَعَ لَوْلَا آتَاكَ اللَّهُ بَآيَاتٍ فَكَرِهْتَ ۞
113. "Their account is only  
With my Lord, if ye  
Could (but) understand.      ۞ إِنْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنَّا نَكُونُ مِنكُمْ مُعْتَدِينَ ۞
114. "I am not one to drive away  
Those who believe."<sup>3190</sup>      ۞ وَمَا أَنَا بِطَارِدِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ۞
115. "I am sent only  
To warn plainly in public."      ۞ إِنْ أَنَا إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ مُبِينٌ ۞
116. They said: "If thou  
Desist not, O Noah!  
Thou shalt be stoned  
(to death)."<sup>3191</sup>      ۞ قَالُوا لَئِنْ لَمْ تَنْتَهِ يَا نُوحُ  
لَتَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمَرْجُومِينَ ۞
117. He said: "O my Lord!  
Truly my people have  
Rejected me.      ۞ قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي قَدْ كُذِّبْتُ ۞
118. "Judge thou, then, between me  
And them openly, and deliver      ۞ كَا فْتَرِ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَهُمْ فَتَحَا وَتَحَىٰ

3188. Note how the repetition rounds off the argument. See n. 3186 above.

3189. The leaders of the people are speaking, as the Quraish leaders spoke in the time of the holy Prophet. "We know that thou hast been trustworthy in thy life. But look at the 'tag rag and bob tail' that follow thee! Dost thou expect us to be like them or to be classed with them?" His answer was: "I know nothing against them; if they have done any wrong, or are only hypocrites, they are answerable to God; how can I drive them away from me, seeing that I am expressly sent to admonish all people?"

3190. Cf. xi. 29. All people who have faith have the right to come and listen to God's Word and receive God's Mercy, whether they are publicans and sinners, "Harijans" and low-caste men, men of "superior" or "inferior" races. The man of God welcomes them all, as His Message has to shine before the whole world.

3191. Two other cases occur to me where prophets of God were threatened with death by stoning: one was Abraham (xix. 46), and the other was Shu'aib (xi. 91). In neither case did the threats deter them from carrying out their mission. On the contrary the threats recoiled on those who threatened. So also did it happen in the case of Noah and the holy Prophet,

Me and those of the Believers  
Who are with me."

119. So We delivered him  
And those with him,  
In the Ark filled  
(With all creatures).<sup>3192</sup>

120. Thereafter We drowned those  
Who remained behind.

121. Verily in this is a Sign:  
But most of them  
Do not believe.<sup>3193</sup>

122. And verily thy Lord  
Is He, the Exalted in Might,  
Most Merciful.

وَمَنْ مَّبْعَى مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ۝

۱۱۹- فَأَنْجَيْنَاهُ وَمَنْ مَّعَهُ  
فِي الْفُلِ الْشُّحُونَ ۝

۱۲۰- ثُمَّ أَعْرَفْنَا بَعْدَ الْبَاقِينَ ۝

۱۲۱- إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً ۖ  
وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ۝

۱۲۲- وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ ۝

C. 166.—The 'Ād were addicted to arrogance;

(xxvi. 123-159.)

They exulted in material strength  
And possessions, and had no faith but in force:  
They were brought low, as were the *Thamūd*,  
Who gave way to extravagance, and were guilty  
Of sacrilege in destroying a symbol  
Of justice and fair-dealing: their repentance  
Was too late: they were blotted out  
Of the earth for the mischief they had made.

#### SECTION 7.

123. The 'Ād (people) rejected<sup>3194</sup>  
The apostles.

124. Behold, their brother Hūd  
Said to them: "Will ye not  
Fear (God)?"

۱۲۳- كَذَّبَتْ عَادُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ۝

۱۲۴- إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ أَخُوهُمْ هُودُ  
أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ۝

3192. The story of Noah's Flood is told in xi. 36-48. Here the point emphasised is Noah's patience and constancy against threats, and the triumph and preservation of God's Truth even though the world was ranged against it.

3193. This and the following verse run like a refrain throughout this Sūra, and give the key-note to the subject-matter: how the Message of God is preached, how it is rejected in all ages, and how it triumphs at last, through the Mercy of God. See xxvi. 8-9, 68-69, 103-104, here (121-122), 139-140, 158-159, 174-175, and 190-191. There are minor refrains, like echoes in music, which will reveal themselves to the careful student.

3194. See n. 1040 to vii. 65 for the 'Ād people and their location. Here the emphasis is on the fact that they were materialists believing in brute force, and felt secure in their fortresses and resources, but were found quite helpless when God's Message came and they rejected it.

125. "I am to you an apostle  
Worthy of all trust:"<sup>3195</sup>
126. "So fear God and obey me.
127. "No reward do I ask  
Of you for it: my reward  
Is only from the Lord  
Of the Worlds.
128. "Do ye build a landmark  
On every high place  
To amuse yourselves?"<sup>3196</sup>
129. "And do ye get for yourselves  
Fine buildings in the hope  
Of living therein (for ever)?
130. "And when ye exert  
Your strong hand,  
Do ye do it like men  
Of absolute power?"<sup>3197</sup>
131. "Now fear God, and obey  
me."<sup>3198</sup>
132. "Yea, fear Him Who  
Has bestowed on you  
Freely all that ye know."<sup>3199</sup>
133. "Freely has He bestowed  
On you cattle and sons,—

١٢٥-إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ ۝

١٢٦-فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا ۝

١٢٧-وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ ۝  
إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَىٰ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ۝

١٢٨-اَبْنُوتُنَّ كُلُّ رِجْعٍ اِيَةً تَعْبَثُونَ ۝

١٢٩-وَتَقْبِضُونَ مَصَانِعَ لَعَلَّكُمْ  
تُخْلِدُونَ ۝

١٣٠-وَإِذَا بَطَشْتُمْ  
بَطَشْتُمْ جَبَّارِينَ ۝

١٣١-فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا ۝

١٣٢-وَاتَّقُوا الَّذِي أَمَدَّكُمْ مِمَّا  
تَعْلَمُونَ ۝

١٣٣-أَمَدَّكُمْ بِأَنْعَامٍ وَبَنِينَ ۝

3195. See n. 3187 to xxvi. 107 above.

3196. Any merely material civilisation prides itself on show and parade. Its votaries scatter monuments for all sorts of things in conspicuous places—monuments which commemorate deeds and events which are forgotten in a few generations! Cf. Shelley's poem on Ozymandias: "I am Ozymandias, King of Kings! Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!.....Boundless and bare the lonely and level sands stretch far away!"

3197. "Without any responsibility or consideration for those who come within your power?"

3198. See n. 3188 above

3199. The gifts are described generally, immaterial and material. "All that ye know" includes not only material things, but knowledge and the faculties by which knowledge may be used for human well-being, all that makes life beautiful and refined. "Cattle" means wealth generally, and "sons" means population and man-power. "Gardens and Springs" are things that contribute to the delight and pleasure of man.

134. "And Gardens and Springs.

135. " Truly I fear for you  
The Penalty of a Great Day." <sup>3200</sup>

136. They said : " It is the same  
To us whether thou  
Admonish us or be not  
Among (our) admonishers ! <sup>3201</sup>

137. " This is no other than  
A customary device  
Of the ancients, <sup>3202</sup>

138. " And we are not the ones  
To receive Pains and Penalties ! "

139. So they rejected him,  
And We destroyed them.  
Verily in this is a Sign :  
But most of them  
Do not believe.

140. And verily thy Lord  
Is He, the Exalted in Might,  
Most Merciful.

#### SECTION 8.

141. The Thamūd (people)  
rejected <sup>3203</sup>  
The apostles.

١٣٤- وَجَدْتُمْ وَعُيُونٌ ۝

١٣٥- إِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ ۝

١٣٦- قَالُوا سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْنَا أَوَعَضْتَ أَمْ لَمْ  
تَكُنْ مِنَ الْوَاعِظِينَ ۝

١٣٧- إِنَّ هَذَا إِلَّا خُلُقُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ۝

١٣٨- وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُعَذِّبِينَ ۝

١٣٩- كَذَّبُوهُ فَأَهْلَكْنَاهُمْ ۝

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً ۝

وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ۝

١٤٠- وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ ۝

١٤١- كَذَّبَتْ ثَمُودُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ۝

3200. " But you have misused all those gifts, and you will suffer the inevitable penalties for your misuse and for your ingratitude."

3201. " We are not going to attend to you whether you preach to us or not." The construction of the second clause, "or be not among our admonishers" is a rapier cut at Hūd, as if they had said : " Oh yes! we have heard plenty of admonishers like you ! " See the next verse.

3202. They said, as many of our modern enemies of religion say, " you are only reviving an ancient superstition, a dope of the crowd ; there is no such thing as a Hereafter, or the sort of punishments you denounce ! "

3203. For the Thamūd people see n. 1043 to vii, 73. They were great builders in stone and a people with agricultural wealth, but they were an exclusive people and oppressed the poor. The point emphasised here is : " How long will your wealth last, especially if you depress your own people and dishonour God's Signs by sacrilege ? " The inscriptions on the Thamūd remains of rock-cut buildings in Al-Bijr are described in Appendix IX at the end of this Sūra.

142. Behold, their brother Šalḥ  
Said to them : " Will you not  
Fear (God) ?

143. " I am to you an apostle  
Worthy of all trust.

144. " So fear God, and obey me.

145. " No reward do I ask  
Of you for it : my reward  
Is only from the Lord  
Of the Worlds.

146. " Will ye be left secure,  
In (the enjoyment of) all  
That ye have here ?—

147. " Gardens and Springs,

148. " And corn-fields and date palms  
With spathes near breaking<sup>3204</sup>  
(With the weight of fruit) ?

149. " And ye carve houses  
Out of (rocky) mountains  
With great skill.

150. " But fear God and obey me ;

151 " And follow not the bidding  
Of those who are extravagant, —<sup>3205</sup>

152. " Who make mischief in the land,  
And mend not (their ways)."

153. They said : " Thou art only  
One of those bewitched !<sup>3206</sup>

١٢٢- رَأَى قَالِ لَهُمْ أَخُوهُمْ صَلَاحٌ  
أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ۝

١٢٣- إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ ۝

١٢٤- فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا ۝

١٢٥- وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ  
إِنْ أَجْرِي إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ۝

١٢٦- أَتَأْتُرُونَ فِي مَا ههنا أَمِينٌ ۝

١٢٧- فِي جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ ۝

١٢٨- وَزُرُوعٍ وَكَثَلٍ طَلَعَهَا هَاضِمٌ ۝

١٢٩- وَتَنْصُبُونَ مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوتًا أَفْرِخِينَ ۝

١٥٠- فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا ۝

١٥١- وَلَا تَطِيعُوا أَمْرَ الشَّرِيفِينَ ۝

١٥٢- الَّذِينَ يُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا  
يُصْلِحُونَ ۝

١٥٣- قَالُوا إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مِنَ الْمُسَحَّرِينَ ۝

3204. The date palm flowers on a long spathe : when the flowers develop into fruit, the heavy ones hang with the load of fruit. The Thamūd evidently were proud of their skill in producing corn and fruit and in hewing fine dwellings out of rocks, like the later dwellings of Roman times in the town of Petra.

3205. They are told : ' All your skill is very well : but cultivate virtue and do not follow the ways of those who put forward extravagant claims for men's powers and material resources, or who lead lives of extravagance in luxury and self-indulgence ; that makes mischief : but the door of repentance is open : will you repent ? '

3206. They think he is talking like a madman, and they say so.

154. "Thou art no more than  
A mortal like us :  
Then bring us a Sign,  
If thou tellest the truth!"

١٥٢- مَا أَنْتَ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُنَا  
فَأْتِ بِآيَةٍ إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ ۝

155. He said : "Here is  
A she-camel: she has <sup>3207</sup>  
A right of watering,  
And ye have a right  
Of watering, (severally)  
On a day appointed.

١٥٥- قَالَ هٰذِهِ نَاقَةٌ  
لَّهَا شِرْبٌ وَلَكُمْ شِرْبٌ  
يَوْمَ مَعْلُومٍ ۝

156. "Touch her not with harm,  
Lest the Penalty  
Of a Great Day  
Seize you."

١٥٦- وَلَا تَسْخَرُوْهَا مِنْ سَخِرَ  
مِنْهَا يَوْمَ عَظِيْمٍ ۝

157. But they ham-strung her :  
Then did they become  
Full of regrets. <sup>3208</sup>

١٥٧- فَعَقَرُوْهَا فَاصْبَحُوْا نَدِيْمِيْنَ ۝

158. But the Penalty seized them.  
Verily in this is a Sign :  
But most of them  
Do not believe.

١٥٨- فَآخَذَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً  
وَمَا كَانَ اَكْثَرُهُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ۝

159. And verily thy Lord  
Is He, the Exalted in Might,  
Most Merciful.

١٥٩- وَاِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الرَّحِيْمُ ۝

C. 167.—The task of Lot was a hard one : his mission  
(xxvi. 160-191). Was to people addicted to crimes abominable.  
His reasoning with them was in vain : it only  
Excited their wrath. They threatened to cast  
Him out, but were themselves overwhelmed  
In disaster. Shu'aib had to rebuke fraud  
And commercial dishonesty : he met only  
Ridicule, but the just and fair dealing  
He preached was vindicated in the end.

3207. For this she-camel, see n. 1044 to vii. 73. The she-camel was to be a Sign and a test-case. Would they respect her rights of watering (and pasturage)?

3208. Their regrets were too late. They had themselves asked for a Sign. The Sign had been given them in the she-camel, which their prophet Salih had put forward as a test case. Would they, through that symbol, respect the law of equity by which all people had rights in water and in the gifts of nature? They refused to respect that law, and committed sacrilege by deliberately killing the she-camel. They themselves came to an evil end.



## SECTION 9.

160. <sup>3209</sup> The people of Lūt rejected  
The apostles.

١٦٠-كَذَّبَتْ قَوْمُ لُوطٍ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ۝

161. Behold, their brother Lūt  
Said to them : " Will ye not  
Fear (God) ?

١٦١-إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ أَخُوهُمْ لُوطُ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ۝

162. " I am to you an apostle  
Worthy of all trust.

١٦٢-إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ ۝

163. " So fear God and obey me.

١٦٣-فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا أَمْرًا ۝

164. " No reward do I ask  
Of you for it : my reward  
Is only from the Lord  
Of the Worlds.

١٦٤-وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ  
إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَىٰ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ۝

165. " Of all the creatures  
In the world, will ye'  
Approach males,

١٦٥-أَتَأْتُونَ الذَّكَرَ إِنْ أَلْمِزْتُمْ ۝

166. " And leave those whom God  
Has created for you  
To be your mates ?  
Nay, ye are a people  
Transgressing (all limits) ! "

١٦٦-وَتَذَرُونَ مَا خَلَقَ لَكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ  
مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ  
بَلْ أَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ عَادُونَ ۝

167. <sup>3210</sup> They said : " If thou desist  
O Lūt! thou wilt assuredly  
Be cast out! " not,

١٦٧-قَالُوا لَئِنْ لَمْ تَنْتَهِ يَا لُوطُ  
لَتَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُتَخَرِّجِينَ ۝

168. He said : " I do detest<sup>3211</sup>  
Your doings. "

١٦٨-قَالَ إِنِّي بَعِثْتُكُمْ مِنَ الْفَالِينَ ۝

3209. The story of Lūt (Lot) will be found in vii. 80-84 : see n. 1049. Here the point is that the people of the Cities of the Plain were shamelessly addicted to vice against nature, and Lūt's warning only exasperated them, until they were destroyed by a shower of brimstone.

3210. Their threat to cast him out has a grim significance in what actually happened. They were destroyed where they were, and he was glad to escape the dreadful Punishment according to the warning he had received.

3211. He was only among them from a stern sense of duty. The whole atmosphere there was detestable to him, and he was glad to escape when duty no longer demanded his presence there. He prayed for deliverance from such surroundings.

169. "O my Lord! deliver me  
And my family from  
Such things as they do!"

١٦٩- رَبِّ نَجِّنِي وَأَهْلِي مَعَ الْعَالَمِينَ ۝

170. So We delivered him  
And his family,—all

١٧٠- فَجَنَيْنَاهُ وَأَهْلَهُ أَجْمَعِينَ ۝

171. Except an old woman <sup>3212</sup>  
Who lingered behind.

١٧١- إِلَّا عَجُوزًا فِي الْغَدِيرِينَ ۝

172. But the rest We destroyed  
Utterly.

١٧٢- ثُمَّ دَمَرْنَا الْآخَرِينَ ۝

173. We rained down on them  
A shower (of brimstone): <sup>3213</sup>  
And evil was the shower  
On those who were admonished  
(But heeded not)!

١٧٣- وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مَطَرًا  
فَسَاءَ مَطَرُ الْمُنْذَرِينَ ۝

174. Verily in this is a Sign:  
But most of them  
Do not believe.

١٧٤- إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً  
وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ۝

175. And verily thy Lord  
Is He, the Exalted in Might  
Most Merciful.

١٧٥- وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ ۝

#### SECTION 10.

176. ~~The~~ The Companions of the  
Wood <sup>3214</sup>  
Rejected the apostles.

١٧٦- كَذَّبَ أَصْحَابُ الْاُيُوتِ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ۝

177. Behold, Shu'aib <sup>3215</sup> said to them:  
"Will ye not fear (God)?"

١٧٧- إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ شُعَيْبٌ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ۝

178. "I am to you an apostle  
Worthy of all trust.

١٧٨- إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ ۝

3212. This was Luq's wife, who lingered behind and was among those who perished. See n. 1051 to vii. 83.

3213. See n. 1052 to vii. 84.

3214. See n. 2000 to xv. 78.

3215. For Shu'aib see n. 1054 to vii. 83.

179. " So fear God and obey me.

180. " No reward do I ask  
Of you for it : my reward  
Is only from the Lord  
Of the Worlds.

181. " Give just measure,<sup>3216</sup>  
And cause no loss  
(To others by fraud).

182. " And weigh with scales  
True and upright.

183. " And withhold not things  
Justly due to men,  
Nor do evil in the land,  
Working mischief.

184. " And fear Him Who created  
You and (Who created)  
The generations before (you) "

185. They said : " Thou art only  
One of those bewitched !

186. " Thou art no more than  
A mortal like us,  
And indeed we think  
Thou art a liar !<sup>3217</sup>

187. " Now cause a piece  
Of the sky to fall on us,  
If thou art truthful ! " <sup>3218</sup>

188. He said : " My Lord  
Knows best what ye do. " <sup>3219</sup>

۞ اٰتٰىنَا اَنْتَۢمُ اللّٰهَ وَاَطِيعُوْنَ ۝

۱۸۰- وَمَا اَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ اَجْرٍ  
۝ اِنْ اَجْرِيْٓ اِلَّا عَلَى رَّبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ۝

۱۸۱- اَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ وَلَا تَكُوْنُوْا مِنَ  
الْمُخْسِرِيْنَ ۝

۱۸۲- وَزِنُوْا بِالْقُسْطِ اِسْمُ الْمُسْتَقِيْمِ ۝

۱۸۳- وَلَا تَبْخُسُوْا النَّاسَ اَشْيَآءَهُمْ  
۝ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوْا فِى الْاَرْضِ مُفْسِدِيْنَ ۝

۱۸۴- وَالْقَوَّالِ الَّذِى خَلَقَكُمْ  
وَالْجِبَلِ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ۝

۱۸۵- قَالُوْا اَلَمْ يَأْتِ اَنْتَ مِنَ الْمُسْتَضَرِّيْنَ ۝

۱۸۶- وَمَا اَنْتَ اِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُنَا  
۝ وَاِنْ كُنْتَ اِلَّا كَاذِبِيْنَ ۝

۱۸۷- فَاَسْقِطْ عَلَيْنَا كِسْفًا مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ  
۝ اِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ ۝

۱۸۸- قَالَ رَبِّىْٓ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ۝

3216. They were a commercial people, but they were given to fraud, injustice, and wrongful mischief (by intermeddling with others). They are asked to fear God and follow His ways: it is He Who also created their predecessors among mankind, who never prospered by fraud and violent wrong-doing, but only by justice and fair dealing.

3217. They deny that he is a prophet or that they are doing wrong, or that any former generations behaved differently. They think they are the true exponents of human nature, and that such as he—idealists—are mere madmen.

3218. 'If you really claim any real contact with God, let us see if you can bring down a piece of the sky to fall on us !'

3219. The challenge to bring down a piece of the sky was merely empty bravado, on the part of those who had called him a liar. But Shu'aib does not insult them. He merely says: "God is the best judge of your conduct: what more can I say?" And God did punish them.

189. But they rejected him.  
Then the punishment  
Of a day of overshadowing  
gloom<sup>3220</sup>  
Seized them, and that was  
The Penalty of a Great Day.<sup>3221</sup>

١٨٩- فَكَذَّبُوهُ  
فَاَخَذَهُمْ عَذَابُ يَوْمِ الظُّلُمَةِ  
اِنَّهٗ كَانَ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيْمٍ

190. Verily in that is a Sign :  
But most of them  
Do not believe.

١٩٠- اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً  
وَمَا كَانَ اَكْثَرُهُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ

191. And verily thy Lord  
Is He, the Exalted in Might,  
Most Merciful.<sup>3222</sup>

١٩١- وَاِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهٗوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الرَّحِيْمُ

C. 168.—Thus the Truth of God must win against folly  
(xxvi. 192-227.) And falsehood. The Spirit of Inspiration  
And Faith brought down the Qur-ān to the mind  
Of the holy Prophet, that he might teach  
In noble Arabic speech, and through it  
Reach the world. If obstinate rebels  
Do resist the Message, their day is brief :  
With humble, gentle kindness it must make  
Its way to all, nearest and farthest.  
It is not like vain words of poets false,  
Wandering without a goal : it is Truth,  
That fills the heart which trusts in God.

#### SECTION 11.

192. Verily this is a Revelation<sup>3223</sup>  
From the Lord of the Worlds :

١٩٢- وَاِنَّهٗ لَتَنْزِيْلُ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ

193. With it came down  
The Spirit of Faith and  
Truth—<sup>3224</sup>

١٩٣- نَزَّلَ بِهٖ الرُّوْحَ الْاَمِيْنُ

3220. Perhaps a shower of ashes and cinders accompanying a volcanic eruption. If these people were the same as the Midianites, there was also an earthquake. See vii. 91 and n. 1063.

3221. It must have been a terrible day of wholesale destruction,—earthquake, volcanic eruption, lava, cinders and ashes, and rumbling noises to frighten those whose death was not instantaneous.

3222. See above, n. 3193 to xxvi. 121.

3223. The hostile reception of some of the previous Messengers having been mentioned, the special characteristics of the Qur-ān are now referred to, to show (1) that it is true, and (2) that its rejection by the Meccan Pagans was of a piece with previous experience in the history of man.: vested interests resist Truth, but it conquers.

3224. *Rūḥ-ul-amin*, the epithet of Gabriel, who came with the inspired Messages to the holy Prophet, is difficult to render in a single epithet in translation. In n. 3187 to xxvi. 107 I have described some of the various shades of meaning attached to the adjective *Amīn* as applied to a Prophet. A further signification as attached to the Spirit of Inspiration is that it is the very quintessence of Faith and Truth, unlike the lying spirits which delude men with falsehood. On the whole, I think "the Spirit of Faith and Truth" will represent the original best here.

194. To thy heart and mind,<sup>3225</sup>  
That thou mayest admonish

١٩٤- عَلَى قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُنْذِرِينَ ۝

195. In the perspicuous  
Arabic tongue,

١٩٥- بِلِسَانٍ عَرَبِيٍّ مُبِينٍ ۝

196. Without doubt it is (announced)  
In the mystic Books<sup>3226</sup>  
Of former peoples.

١٩٦- وَإِنَّهُ لَفِي زُبُرِ الْأَوَّلِينَ ۝

197. Is it not a Sign  
To them that the Learned  
Of the Children of Israel  
Knew it (as true)?<sup>3227</sup>

١٩٧- أَوَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُمْ آيَةٌ  
أَن يَعْلَمَنَّهُ عُلَمَاؤُا بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ ۝

198. Had We revealed it  
To any of the non-Arabs,

١٩٨- وَلَوْ نَزَّلْنَاهُ عَلَىٰ بَعْضِ الْأَعْجَمِينَ ۝

199. And had he recited it  
To them, they would not  
Have believed in it.<sup>3228</sup>

١٩٩- فَقَرَأَهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مَا كَانُوا بِهٖ  
مُؤْمِنِينَ ۝

200. Thus have We caused it  
To enter the hearts<sup>3229</sup>  
Of the Sinners.

٢٠٠- كَذَٰلِكَ سَلَكْنَاهُ فِي قُلُوبِ الْفَٰجِرِينَ ۝

3225. *Qalb* (Heart) signifies not only the seat of the affections, but also the seat of the memory and understanding. The process of inspiration is indicated by the impression of the divine Message on the inspired one's heart, memory, and understanding, from which it was promulgated in human speech to the world. In this case the human speech was the perspicuous Arabic tongue, which would be plainly intelligible to the audience who would immediately hear it and be through them transmitted to all the world.

3226. In iii. 184 I have translated *Zubur* as Books of dark prophecies. See n. 490 there. Here perhaps mystic Scriptures of all kinds are meant, as the universal Message of Islam was adumbrated in all true Books of divine knowledge.

3227. Many of the Jewish Doctors recognised the holy Prophet's Message as a Message from God, e.g., 'Abdullāh ibn Salām and Mukhairiq. The latter was a man of property, which he left for Islām. (There were also Christian monks and learned men who recognised the Prophet's mission.)

3228. The turn of Arabia having come for receiving God's Revelation, as was foretold in previous Revelations, it was inevitable that it should be in the Arab tongue through the mouth of an Arab. Otherwise it would have been unintelligible, and the Arabs could not have received the Faith and become the vehicles for its promulgation as actually happened in history.

3229. "Thus" I think means through the medium of the Arabic language and the Arab people. The Qur-ān penetrated through their language and their hearts. If the hard-hearted among them did not believe, they will see when the Penalty comes, how grievous a mistake they made. For the Penalty must come, even when they least expected it. They will be caught saying or thinking, "There is plenty of time; we can get another respite," when already it will have become too late for them to turn over a new leaf.

201. They will not believe  
In it until they see  
The grievous Penalty ;
202. But the (Penalty) will come  
To them of a sudden,  
While they perceive it not ;
203. Then they will say :  
" Shall we be respited ? "
204. Do they then ask  
For Our Penalty to be  
Hastened on ? <sup>3230</sup>
205. Seest thou ? If We do  
Let them enjoy (this life)  
For a few years,
206. Yet there comes to them  
At length the (Punishment)  
Which they were promised !
207. It will profit them not  
That they enjoyed (this life) !
208. Never did We destroy  
A population, but had  
Its warners—
209. By way of reminder ;  
And We never are unjust. <sup>3231</sup>
210. Do evil ones have brought <sup>3232</sup>  
Down this (Revelation) :

٢٠١- لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ حَتَّى يَرَوْا الْعَذَابَ  
الْأَلِيمَ ۝

٢٠٢- فَإِنِّيَأْتِيهِمْ بَغْتَةً وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ۝

٢٠٣- فَيَقُولُوا هَلْ نَحْنُ مُنْظَرُونَ ۝

٢٠٤- أَفَبِعَذَابِنَا يَسْتَعْجِلُونَ ۝

٢٠٥- أَفَرَأَيْتَ إِن مَتَّعْنَاهُمْ سِنِينَ ۝

٢٠٦- ثُمَّ جَاءَهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يُوعَدُونَ ۝

٢٠٧- مَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ ۝

٢٠٨- وَمَا أَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ إِلَّا لَهَا  
مُنْذُرُونَ ۝

٢٠٩- وَذُكِّرُوا وَلَٰكِنَّا ظَالِمِينَ ۝

٢١٠- وَمَا تَنْزِيلُ يَوْمَ الشَّيْطَانِ ۝

3230. While some sinners out of negligence postpone the day of repentance till it is too late, others more bold actually ask out of bravado that God's Punishment should be brought down on them at once, as they do not believe in God or His Punishment ! The answer to them is : It will come soon enough—too soon, they will think, when it comes ! Cf. xxii. 47 and notes.

3231. God will grant much respite to sinners, for He is Most Gracious and Merciful. But all this respite will profit them nothing if they are merely immersed in the vanities of this world. Again and again, in spite of their rebellion and their rejection, does God send warnings and warners before the final Punishment of Justice. For God knows human weakness, and He will never be unjust in the least.

3232. When anything extraordinary happens, there are always people desirous of putting the worst construction on it, and saying that it is the work of the evil ones, the devils. So when the Qur-ān came with its Message in wondrous Arabic, its enemies could only account for its power by attributing it to evil spirits ! Such a beneficent message can never suit the purposes of the evil ones, nor would it be in their power to produce it. In fact Good and Evil are poles asunder, and Evil cannot even hear words of Good, of tender Pity for sinners and Forgiveness for the penitent !

211. It would neither suit them  
Nor would they be able  
(To produce it).
212. Indeed they have been removed  
Far from even (a chance of)  
Hearing it.
213. So call not on any  
Other god with God,  
Or thou wilt be among  
Those under the Penalty.
214. And admonish thy nearest  
Kinsmen,
215. And lower thy wing<sup>3233</sup>  
To the Believers who  
Follow thee.
216. Then if they disobey thee,  
Say: "I am free (of responsibility)  
For what ye do!"<sup>3234</sup>
217. And put thy trust  
On the Exalted in Might,  
The Merciful,—
218. Who seeth thee standing  
Forth (in prayer),
219. And thy movements among<sup>3235</sup>  
Those who prostrate themselves.

٢١١-وَمَا يُلْبِغِي لَهُمْ وَمَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ ۝

٢١٢-إِنَّهُمْ عَنِ السَّمْعِ لَمَعَزُولُونَ ۝

٢١٣-فَلَا تَدْعُ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ  
تَتَكُونُ مِنَ الْمَعْذُوبِينَ ۝

٢١٤-وَأَنْذِرْ عَشِيرَتَكَ الْأَقْرَبِينَ ۝

٢١٥-وَاخْفُضْ جَنَاحَكَ لِمَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ  
مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ۝

٢١٦-وَإِنْ عَصَوْكَ  
فَقُلْ إِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ۝

٢١٧-وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى الْعَزِيزِ الرَّحِيمِ ۝

٢١٨-الَّذِي يَرَاكَ حِينَ تَقُومُ ۝

٢١٩-وَتَقْلُبَكَ فِي السُّجُودِ ۝

3233. That is, be kind, gentle, and considerate with them, as a high-flying bird is when she lowers her wing to her offspring. Cf. xvii. 24 and n. 2205, and xv. 88 and n. 2011.

3234. "Disobey thee" implied that they did something wrong, for the holy Prophet commanded what was right and forbade what was wrong. If, then, any of his flock did wrong, the responsibility was not his, for he, like a good shepherd, tried to keep them right. What was he then to do? He would continue his teaching. But if any of them went so far wrong as to try to injure their own Teacher, Leader, and Guide, there was nothing for him to fear. His trust was only in God, and God sees and appraises all men's actions at their true worth.

3235. Literally, the standing and prostration are postures in Muslim prayer: the holy Prophet was equally earnest, sincere, and zealous in prayer for himself and for all his people. But there is a wider meaning. The postures in prayer are symbolical of attitudes of mind, and behaviour in life generally, and the "movements" may refer also to various vicissitudes, in which a man's soul is tried and tested just as the body is exercised in standing, bowing, kneeling, and prostration in prayer. The Prophet's behaviour was exemplary in all the turns of fortune, and however foolish men may cavil, his purity and uprightness are fully known to God.

220. For it is He  
Who heareth and knoweth  
All things.

۲۲۰-إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ

221. Shall I inform you,  
(O people!), on whom it is  
That the evil ones descend? <sup>3236</sup>

۲۲۱-هَلْ أَنْبِئُكُمْ عَلَىٰ مَنْ تَنْزِلُ  
الشَّيَاطِينُ

222. They descend on every  
Lying, wicked person,

۲۲۲-تَنْزِلُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ آثِمٍ

223. (Into whose ears) they pour  
Hearsay vanities, and most  
Of them are liars.

۲۲۳-يُلْقُونَ السَّمْعَ وَالْأُذُنُ كَذِبُونَ

224. And the Poets, — <sup>3237</sup>  
It is those straying in Evil,  
Who follow them:

۲۲۴-وَالشُّعْرَاءُ يَتَّبِعُهُمُ الْغَاوُونَ

225. Seest thou not that they  
Wander distracted in every  
Valley? —

۲۲۵-أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّهُمْ فِي كُلِّ وَادٍ يَهِيمُونَ

226. And that they say  
What they practise not? —

۲۲۶-وَأَنَّهُمْ يَقُولُونَ مَا لَا يَفْعَلُونَ

227. Except those who believe, <sup>3238</sup>  
Work righteousness, engage much

۲۲۷-إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ

3236. To people who maliciously suggested that the holy Prophet was possessed or inspired by evil spirits (xxvi. 210 above) the reply had already been made, but it is now declared that that suggestion is itself the work of Evil. Behind such suggestions are lying and wickedness, or at best some half-truths caught up in hearsay and twisted so as to show Good in an evil light.

3237. *The Poets*: to be read along with the exceptions mentioned in verse 227 below. Poetry and other arts are not in themselves evil, but may on the contrary be used in the service of religion and righteousness. But there is a danger that they may be prostituted for base purposes. If they are insincere ("they say what they do not") or are divorced from actual life or its goodness or its serious purpose, they may become instruments of evil or futility. They then wander about without any set purpose, and seek the depths (valleys) of human folly rather than the heights of divine light.

3238. Poetry and the fine arts which are to be commended are those which emanate from minds steeped in Faith, which try to carry out in life the fine sentiments they express in their artistic work, aim at the glory of God rather than at self-glorification or the fulsome praise of men with feet of clay, and do not (as in Jihād) attack anything except aggressive evil. In this sense a perfect artist should be a perfect man. Perfection may not be attainable in this life, but it should be the aim of every man, and especially of one who wishes to become a supreme artist, not only in technique but in spirit and essentials. Among the commendable poets contemporary with the holy Prophet may be mentioned Ḥassān and Labīd: the latter had the honour of being one of the seven whose poems were selected for "hanging" (the *Mu'allaqāt*) in the Days of Ignorance.



In the remembrance of God,  
 And defend themselves only after  
 They are unjustly attacked.  
 And soon will the unjust<sup>3239</sup>  
 Assailants know what vicissitudes  
 Their affairs will take!

وَذَكِّرُوا اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا  
 وَانصَرُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا ظَلَمُوا وَسَيَعْلَمُ  
 الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا أَيَّ مُنْقَلَبٍ يَنْقَلِبُونَ ۝




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3239. These were the scurrilous rhymsters, who were doomed to come to an evil end.

## APPENDIX IX.

Thamūd Inscriptions at al-Ḥijr. (xxvi. 141-159; xv. 80-84; and vii. 73-79.)

Mr. C. M. Doughty travelled in North-Western Arabia and Najd in the 1880's, and his book *Arabia Deserta* forms one of the most notable of Arabian Travel-books. It was first published in two volumes by the Cambridge University Press in 1888, and has recently gone through several editions. The edition I have used is the unabridged one-volume edition printed in London in 1926. The references in this Appendix should be understood to refer to that edition.

Doughty travelled on the old Pilgrim Caravan route (*Darb ul Ḥajj*) with a Pilgrim Caravan from Damascus as far as Madā'in Ṣāliḥ, and then parted company with the Pilgrims and turned into Najd. Madā'in Ṣāliḥ (the Cities of Ṣāliḥ), is one of the stations on the Syrian Pilgrim route, about 180 miles north of Medina. Tabūk, to which the holy Prophet led an expedition in A.H. 9 (see Introduction to S. ix), is about 170 miles farther to the north-west, and Ma'an Junction about 150 miles still farther. Madā'in Ṣāliḥ was also an important station on the prehistoric gold and frankincense (*bakhūr*) route between Yemen and Egypt or Syria. In sacred history it marks the ruined site of the Thamūd people to whom the prophet Ṣāliḥ was sent, whose she-camel was a symbolic Sign and is connected with Ṣāliḥ's history. See n. 3208 to xxvi. 155-157. To the west and north-west of Madā'in Ṣāliḥ are three *Ḥarrats* or tracts of volcanic land covered with lava, stretching as far as Tabūk.

This is how Doughty describes his first view of Madā'in Ṣāliḥ, approaching from the north-west. "At length in the dim morning twilight, as we journeyed, we were come to a sandy brow and a straight descending-place betwixt cliffs of sandstones. There was some shouting in the forward, and Aswad bid me look up, 'this was a famous place, *Mabrah-an-Nāqa*'" (the kneeling place of the she-camel of Ṣāliḥ)... "It is short, at first steep, and issues upon the plain of *al-Ḥijr*, which is Madā'in Ṣāliḥ; where the sun coming up showed the singular landscape of this valley-plain, encompassed with mighty sand-rock precipices (which here resemble ranges of city walls, fantastic towers, and castle buildings), and upon them lie high shouldering sand drifts. The bottom is sand, with much growth of desert bushes; and I perceived some thin sprinkled volcanic drift. Westward is seen the immense mountain blackness, terrible and lowering, of the Ḥarrat." (*Arabia Deserta*, p. 83, vol. 1.)

Doughty took rubbings of some of the Inscriptions which were accessible to him, and they were studied by the great Semitic scholar M. Ernest Renan and published by the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres. Renan's Report in French is printed as an Appendix to Chapters IV, V and VI of *Arabia Deserta* (pp. 180-187, vol. 1), and M. le Marquis de Vogüé's Note (also in French) on the Nabatæan sculptured Architecture at Madā'in Ṣāliḥ at pp. 620-623, vol. 1.

The general result of these studies may be summarised. The sculpture and architecture are found to be of the same kind as in the Nabatæan monuments at Petra (for which see n. 1043 to vii. 73). At Petra there are no dated Inscriptions preserved, but at Madāin Šaliḥ we have several. There at Madāin Šaliḥ perhaps 100 sepulchral rock-hewn chambers, in some of which are found human bones and remains, showing that the Nabatæans knew the art of embalming, and used linen of the same kind as was used in ancient Egypt. The tombs are dedicated in perpetuity to named families, and the named Nabatæan kings have, each, the epithet "loving his people". There are flat side-pilasters, and the figures of four-footed beasts, eagles, and other birds are discernible. Besides the sepulchral chambers, there is a great Hall or Council Chamber (*Līwān*), 25 ft. × 27 ft. × 13 ft. This may have been a Temple. The gods worshipped were those whose names we know of from other Nabatæan sources,—Dusar's, Martaba, Allāt, Manā , Keis, and Hubal. Allāt, Manāt, and Hubal are also known to us in connection with the idols of the Pagan Quraish of the Times of Ignorance. It is interesting to find the word *Mesjeda* (Arabic *Masjid*) already used here for a "place of worship". Triads of stones were worshipped as gods.

The Inscriptions have dates from 3 B.C. to 79 A.D. Within this short period of 82 years we can see something of the development of Semitic palæography. The writing becomes more and more cursive with the years. We have here a central point between Old Armenian, Square Hebrew, Palmyran, Sinaitic, Kūfi, and Naskḥ.

We may treat the Nabatæans as historical, as we have established dates. The Thamūd were prehistoric, and occupied sites which were afterwards occupied by the Nabatæans and others. The kneeling place of Šaliḥ's she-camel (*Mabrah-un-Nāqa*) and the well of the she-camel (*Bīr-un-Nāqa*), and a number of local names keep alive the race-memory of an ancient Arabian people and their prophet Šaliḥ.

INTRODUCTION TO SŪRA XXVII (*Naml*).

This Sūra is cognate in subject to the one preceding it and the two following it. Its chronological place is also in the same group of four.

Here there is much mystic symbolism. Wonders in the physical world are types of greater wonders in the spiritual world. The Fire, the White Hand, and the Rod, in the story of Moses; the speech of birds, the crowds of Jinns and men pitted against a humble ant, and the Hoopoe and the Queen of Sheba, in Solomon's story; the defeat of the plot of the nine wicked men in the story of Šālih; and the crime of sin with open eyes in the story of Lot;—lead up to the lessons of true and false worship and the miracles of God's grace and revelation.

*Summary.*

Wonderful is Revelation, like the Fire which Moses saw, which was a glimpse of God's Glory, and His Miracles, which searched out those who refused Faith in spite of the light they had received (xxvii. 1-14, and C. 169).

Solomon knew the speech of Birds and had hosts of Jinns and men; yet the wise ant had ample defence against them: the Hoopoe who was absent at his muster, was yet serving him: the Queen of Sheba had a kingdom, but it submitted with conviction to the Wisdom of Solomon and the Kingdom of God (xxvii. 15-44, and C. 170).

Fools ascribe ill-luck to godliness as in Šālih's story, or fall into their lusts with their eyes open, as in Lūṭ's story; but their plots and their rage will be foiled by God (xxvii. 45-58, and C. 171).

God's glory and goodness are supreme over all Creation: Unfaith will yield to Faith in the final adjustment of values: so follow Revelation, serve God, and trust in Him (xxvii. 59-93, and C. 172).

C. 169.—Revelation shows us a glimpse of the spiritual  
(xxvii. 1-14.)

World, guides us in this life, and gives us  
The Hope of eternal Bliss in the Hereafter.  
It works a complete transformation in us,  
As it did with Moses when he saw  
The mystic Fire and was given the Signs  
With which to reclaim a people lost  
In superstition and sin, and proud of sin.

## Sura XXVII.

*Naml*, or the Ants.

*In the name of God, Most Gracious,  
Most Merciful.*

1. *Ala. Sin.*<sup>3240</sup>

These are verses  
Of the Qur-an,—a Book  
That makes (things) clear ;

2. A Guide ; and Glad Tidings  
For the Believers,—<sup>3241</sup>

3. Those who establish regular prayers  
And give in regular charity,  
And also have (full) assurance  
Of the Hereafter.

4. As to those who believe not  
In the Hereafter, We have  
Made their deeds pleasing<sup>3242</sup>  
In their eyes ; and so they  
Wander about in distraction.5. Such are they for whom  
A grievous Penalty is (waiting) :  
And in the Hereafter theirs  
Will be the greatest loss.<sup>3243</sup>6. As to thee, the Qur-an  
Is bestowed upon thee  
From the presence of One  
Who is Wise and All-Knowing.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

١- طس

تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْقُرْآنِ وَكِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ

٢- هُدًى وَبُشْرَىٰ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

٣- الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ  
وَهُمْ بِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ

٤- إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ  
زَيَّاتْنَا لَهُمْ أَعْمَالَهُمْ فَهُمْ يَعْمَهُونَ

٥- أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ لَهُمْ سُوءُ الْعَذَابِ  
وَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ هُمُ الْخَسِرُونَ

٦- وَإِلَّاكَ تَتَلَقَّى الْقُرْآنَ  
مِن لَّدُنْ حَكِيمٍ عَلِيمٍ

3240. See n. 3137 to xxvi. 1.

3241. Revelation is here presented in three aspects : (1) it explains things, the nature of God, our own position, and the spiritual world around ; (2) it directs us to right conduct and keeps us from evil ; and (3) to those who have Faith and accept its guidance, it gives the good news of forgiveness, purification, and the achievement of salvation.

3242. Those who reject God and follow Evil have a good conceit of themselves. Their deeds are pleasing to no one else. As they have rejected God's guidance, they are allowed to hug their own self-conceit, and given further respite for repentance. But they follow their own whims and wander about in distraction, as they have no standards such as guide the godly.

3243. The account will then be made up, and they will be found to be terribly in loss. They will be the worst in loss, for all their self-complacency.

7. Behold! Moses said<sup>3244</sup>  
To his family: "I perceive  
A fire; soon will I bring you  
From there some information,  
Or I will bring you  
A burning brand to light  
Our fuel, that ye may  
Warm yourselves.

فَلَمَّا قَالَ مُوسَى لِأَهْلِهِ إِنِّي آنَسْتُ نَارًا  
سَالِيَةً مِنْهَا مَخْبِرٌ  
أَوْ أُنِيبُكُمْ بِشِئَانٍ قَبِيلٍ  
لَعَلَّكُمْ تَصْطَلُونَ ۝

8. But when he came  
To the (Fire), a voice  
Was heard: "Blessed are those<sup>3245</sup>  
In the Fire and those around:  
And Glory to God,  
The Lord of the Worlds,

هـ فَلَمَّا جَاءَهَا نُفُوءٌ أَنَّ بُرُوكَ  
مَنْ فِي النَّارِ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا  
وَسُبْحَنَ اللَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ۝

9. "O Moses! Verily,  
I am God, the Exalted  
In Might, the Wise!...

و- يَمُوسَى إِلَهَ أَنَا اللَّهُ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ۝

10. "Now do thou throw thy rod!"<sup>3246</sup>  
But when he saw it  
Moving (of its own accord)  
As if it had been a snake,  
He turned back in retreat,  
And retraced not his steps:  
"O Moses!" (it was said),  
"Fear not: truly, in My presence,  
Those called as apostles  
Have no fear,—<sup>3247</sup>

١- وَأَلْقِ عَصَاكَ  
فَلَمَّا رَأَاهَا تَهْتَزُّ كَأَنَّهَا جَانٌّ  
وَلَّى مُدْبِرًا وَلَمْ يُعَقِّبْ  
يَمُوسَى لَا تَخَفْ  
إِنِّي لَا يَخَافُ لَدَى الْمُرْسَلِينَ ۝

3244. Cf. xx. 9-24. Both there and here there is a reference to the dawn of Revelation in the heart of Moses. The points there emphasised will be found in the notes to that passage. Here the emphasis is on the wonderful nature of the Fire and the wonderful way in which Moses was transformed at the touch of spiritual Light. He was travelling in the Sinai desert with his family. Seeking ordinary light, he came upon a Light which took him to the highest mysteries of God. No doubt all his inner history had prepared him for his great destiny. It is the inner history that matters, and not the place or position of a man in the eyes of his ordinary fellows.

3245. Those: in the original the pronoun is in the singular, "man", which is often used with a plural meaning. The Commentators usually construe it to mean that it was not a physical fire, but it was the glory of the Angels, a reflection of the Glory of God. Hence the exclamation at the end of the verse.

3246. Moses was now transported into an entirely new world. What he had taken to be an ordinary fire was a gleam of the spiritual world,—rays from the angels of light. The desert in which he had been was the lower life stripped of its ornaments, leading to the divine light of Sinai. Through that Light he heard the Voice of the Source of Wisdom and Power. His own rod or staff was no longer the dead piece of wood that had hitherto supported him. It became instinct with life, a life that moved, and had the power of offence and defence in it, as all living Good must have in its fight with Evil. His own transformation is described in the next note.

3247. In this great, new, wonderful world, that was opening out to Moses, he had to get his vision adjusted to his new surroundings, as an ordinary man has to adjust his sight before he can see in any very strong light that is new to him. The staff which had become alive as a snake frightened him: yet it was to be his own instrument of work in his new mission. All fear was to be cast out of his mind, as befitted a man chosen by God.

11. "But if any have done wrong  
And have thereafter substituted  
Good to take the place of evil,<sup>3248</sup>  
Truly, I am Oft-Forgiving,  
Most Merciful.
12. "Now put thy hand into  
Thy bosom, and it will  
Come forth white without stain<sup>3249</sup>  
(Or harm): (these are) among  
The nine Signs (thou wilt take)<sup>3250</sup>  
To Pharaoh and his people:  
For they are a people  
Rebellious in transgression."
13. But when Our Signs came  
To them, that should have<sup>3251</sup>  
Opened their eyes, they said:  
"This is sorcery manifest!"
14. And they rejected those Signs  
In iniquity and arrogance,  
Though their souls were convinced  
Thereof: so see what was  
The end of those  
Who acted corruptly!

١١- إِنْ مِّنْ ظَلَمٍ ثُمَّ بَدَّلَ  
حَسَنًا بَعْدَ شَرٍّ  
فَلَنَافَعُهُ وَرَحِيمٌ  
١٢- وَأَدْخِلْ يَدَكَ فِي جَيْبِكَ  
تَخْرُجُ بَيْضَاءَ مِنْ غَيْرِ سُوءٍ  
فِي تِسْعِ آيَاتٍ إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ وَقَوْمِهِ  
إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا فَاسِقِينَ  
١٣- فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ آيَاتُنَا مُبْجَرَةً  
قَالُوا هَذَا إِسْرَافٌ مُّبِينٌ  
١٤- وَكَفَرُوا بِهَا  
وَاسْتَكْبَرْتُمْ أَنْتُمْ ظُلُمًا وَعُلُوًّا  
فَالنَّظْرُ كَيْفَ كَانَ حَاقِبَةُ الْمُفْسِدِينَ

C. 170.—No less were David and Solomon versed  
(xxvii. 15-44.) In knowledge and mystic wisdom. Even  
Solomon could appreciate the wisdom  
Of the humble Ant. He used all his power  
And resources in extending the Kingdom

3248. His slaying the Egyptian (n. 3146 to xxvi. 14), however defensible from certain aspects, was yet something from his past that had to be washed off, and God, Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful, did it out of His abounding Grace. Nay, more; he was given a pure, Radiant Hand, as a Sign of his personal transformation, as stated in the next verse.

3249. Cf. xx. 22. There the expression is: "Draw thy hand close to thy side." As far as the physical act is concerned, the expressions there and here mean the same thing. Moses had a loose-fitting robe. If he put his hand within the folds of the robe, it would go to his bosom on the side of his body opposite to that from which his hand came; i.e., if it was his right hand it would go to the left side of his bosom. But the difference of expression has a little spiritual significance. The bosom here stands for his innermost being, which was being so transformed with divine light as to lend the radiance to his hand also, his instrument of action. The hand comes out white and radiant, without a stain. Ordinarily if the skin becomes white it is a sign of disease or leprosy. Here it was the opposite. It was a sign of radiance and glory from the higher Light.

3250. *The nine Signs*: see n. 1091 to vii. 133.

3251. The Signs should have clearly opened the eyes of any persons who honestly examined them and thought about them. Those who rejected them were perverse and were going against their own light and inner conviction. That was the aggravating feature of their sin.

Of God. In wonderful ways did He lead  
The Queen of Sheba to the Light of the Faith  
Of Unity, and confirmed her in pure  
Worship, the worship of the Lord of the Worlds.

## SECTION 2.

15. We gave (in the past)  
Knowledge to David and  
Solomon : <sup>3252</sup>  
And they both said :  
"Praise be to God, Who  
Has favoured us above many  
Of His servants who believe!" <sup>3253</sup>

16. And Solomon was David's heir. <sup>3254</sup>  
He said : "O ye people!  
We have been taught the speech <sup>3255</sup>  
Of Birds, and on us  
Has been bestowed (a little)  
Of all things : this is  
Indeed Grace manifest (from  
God)." <sup>3256</sup>

17. And before Solomon were  
marshalled

١٥- وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا دَاوُدَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ عِلْمًا  
وَقَالَ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الذِّي  
نُفَكِّرُكَ عَلَى كَثِيرٍ مِّنْ عِبَادِهِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

١٦- وَوَرِثَ سُلَيْمَانُ دَاوُدَ  
وَقَالَ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ عَلَّمْنَا مَدَنَ الطَّيْرِ  
وَأَوْتَيْنَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ  
إِنَّ هَذَا هُوَ الْفَضْلُ الْمُبِينُ

١٧- وَخُشِرَ لِسُلَيْمَانَ

3252. Cf. xxi. 78-82. "Knowledge" means such knowledge as leads up to the higher things in life, the Wisdom that was shown in their decisions and judgments, and the understanding that enabled them to fulfil their mission in life. They were both just men and apostles of God. The Bible, as we have it, is inconsistent : on the one hand it calls David "a man after God's own heart" (1 Samuel, xiii. 14, and Acts xiii. 22) ; and the Christians acclaim Christ as a son of David ; but on the other hand, horrible crimes are ascribed to him, which, if he had committed them, would make him a monster of cruelty and injustice. About Solomon, too, while he is described as a glorious king, there are stories of his lapses into sin and idolatry. The Muslim teaching considers them both to be men of piety and wisdom, and high in spiritual knowledge.

3253. They ascribed, as was proper, their knowledge, wisdom, and power to the only true Source of all good, God.

3254. The point is that Solomon not only inherited his father's kingdom but his spiritual insight and the prophetic office, which do not necessarily go from father to son.

3255. *Speech of Birds*. The spoken word in human speech is different from the means of communication which birds and animals have between each other. But no man can doubt that they have means of communication with each other, if he only observes the orderly flight of migratory birds or the regulated behaviour of ants, bees, and other creatures who live in communities. The wisdom of Solomon and others like him (he speaks of "we") consisted in understanding these things—in the animal world and in the lower fringes of human intelligence.

3256. "A little of all things" : Solomon was a king of power and authority ; outside his kingdom he had influence among many neighbouring peoples ; he had knowledge of birds, and beasts and plants ; he was just and wise, and understood men ; and above all, he had spiritual insight, which brought him near to God. Thus he had something of all kinds of desirable gifts. And with true gratitude he referred them to God, the Giver of all gifts.



His hosts,—of Jinns and men  
And birds, and they were all  
In order and ranks.<sup>3257</sup>

18. At length, when they came  
To a (lowly) valley of ants,  
One of the ants said:  
"O ye ants, get into  
Your habitations, lest Solomon  
And his hosts crush you  
(Under foot) without knowing  
it."<sup>3258</sup>

19. So he smiled, amused  
At her speech; and he said:  
"O my Lord! so order me  
That I may be grateful  
For Thy favours, which Thou  
Hast bestowed on me and<sup>3259</sup>  
On my father, and that  
I may work the righteousness  
That will please Thee:<sup>3260</sup>  
And admit me, by Thy Grace,  
To the ranks of Thy  
Righteous Servants."<sup>3261</sup>

جُئِدُوا مِنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنْسِ وَالطَّيْرِ  
لَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ عُونَ

١٨- حَتَّى إِذَا أَتَوْا عَلَى وَادِ النَّمْلِ  
قَالَتْ نَمْلَةٌ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّمْلُ ادْخُلُوا  
مَسْكِنَكُمْ لَا يَحْطَبُكُمْ سُلَيْمَانُ وَجُنُودُهُ  
وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ

١٩- تَبَسَّمَ ضَاحِكًا مِنْ قَوْلِهَا وَقَالَ  
رَبِّ أَوْزِعْنِي أَنْ أَشْكُرَ  
نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ  
وَعَلَى وَالِدِي وَأَنْ أَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا  
تَرْضَاهُ وَأَدْخِلْنِي بِرَحْمَتِكَ  
فِي عِبَادِكَ الصَّالِحِينَ

3257. Besides the literal meaning, there are two symbolical meanings. (1) All his subjects of varying grades of intelligence, taste, and civilization, were kept in due order and co-operation, by his discipline, justice, and good government. (2) The gifts of various kinds, which he possessed (see last note), he used in proper order and co-ordination, as if they were a well-disciplined army, thus getting the best possible results from them.

3258. This verse and the next, read together, suggest the symbolical meaning as predominant. The ant, to outward appearance, is a very small and humble creature. In the great pomp and circumstances of the world, she (generic feminine in Arabic) may be neglected or even trampled on by a people who mean her no harm. Yet, by her wisdom, she carries on her own life within her own sphere ("habitations") unmolested, and makes a useful contribution to the economy of the world. So there is room for the humblest people in the spiritual world.

3259. The counterpart to the position of the humble ant is the position of a great king like Solomon. He prays that his power and wisdom and all other gifts may be used for righteousness and for the benefit of all around him. The ant being in his thoughts, we may suppose that he means particularly in his prayer that he may not even unwittingly tread on humble beings in his preoccupations with the great things of this world.

3260. The righteousness which pleases the world is often very different from the righteousness which pleases God. Solomon prays that he may always take God's Will as his standard, rather than the standards of men.

3261. In the Kingdom of God, righteousness is the badge of citizenship. And although there are great and noble grades (see n. 586 to iv. 69), the base of that citizenship is the universal brotherhood of righteousness. The greatest in that Kingdom are glad and proud to pray for that essential badge.

20. And he took a muster  
Of the Birds; and he said:  
"Why is it I see not  
The Hoopoe? Or is he  
Among the absentees?"<sup>3262</sup>

وَتَقَعَّدَ الطَّيْرَ فَقَالَ  
مَا لِي لَا أَرَى الْهُدُودَ  
أَمْ كَانَ مِنَ الْغَائِبِينَ ○

21. "I will certainly punish him  
With a severe penalty,  
Or execute him, unless he  
Bring me a clear reason  
(For absence)."

لَأُعَذِّبَنَّكَ عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا  
أَوْ لَا أَذْهَبَنَّكَ أَوْ لِيَأْتِنِي بِسَلْطَنٍ مُبِينٍ

22. But the Hoopoe tarried not  
Far: he (came up and) said:  
"I have compassed (territory)  
Which thou hast not compassed,  
And I have come to thee  
From Sabā<sup>3263</sup> with tidings true.

فَمَكَثَ غَيْرَ بَعِيدٍ فَقَالَ  
أَحْطَيْتُ بِمَا لَمْ تُحِطْ بِهِ  
وَجِئْتُكَ مِنْ سَبَإٍ بِنَبَأٍ يَقِينٍ ○

23. "I found (there) a woman<sup>3264</sup>  
Ruling over them and provided<sup>3265</sup>  
With every requisite; and she  
Has a magnificent throne.

رَأَيْتُ وَجَدْتُ امْرَأَةً تَمْلِكُهُمْ وَأُوتِيَتْ  
مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَلَهَا عَرْشٌ عَظِيمٌ ○

3262. Solomon was no idle or easy-going king. He kept all his organisation strictly up to the mark, both his armies literally and his forces (metaphorically). His most mobile arm was the Birds, who were light on the wing and flew and saw everything like efficient scouts. One day he missed the Hoopoe in his muster. The hoopoe is a light, graceful creature, with elegant plumage of many colours, and a beautiful yellow crest on his head, which entitles him to be called a royal bird.

3263. Sabā may reasonably be identified with the Biblical Sheba (1 Kings x 1-10). It is further referred to in the Sūra called after its name: xxxiv. 15-20. It was a city in Yemen, said to have been three days' journey (say 50 miles) from the city of Ṣan'ā. A recent German explorer, Dr. Hans Helfritz, claims to have located it in what is now Ḥaḡhramaut territory. The famous dam of Ma'arib made the country very prosperous, and enabled it to attain a high degree of civilization ("provided with every requisite" in the next verse). The Queen of Sheba therefore rightly held up her head high until she beheld the glories of Solomon.

3264. The Queen of Sheba (by name Bilqis in Arabian tradition) came apparently from Yemen, but she had affinities with Abyssinia and possibly ruled over Abyssinia also. The Ḥabasha tribe (after whom Abyssinia was named) came from Yemen. Between the southern coast of Yemen and the north-eastern coast of Abyssinia (now occupied by Italy and France) there are only the Straits of Bāb-al-Mandab, barely twenty miles across. In the 10th or 11th century B.C. there were frequent invasions of Abyssinia from Arabia, and Solomon's reign of 40 years is usually synchronised with B.C. 992 to 952. The Sabæan and Himyarite alphabets, in which we find the south Arabian pre-Islamic inscriptions, passed into Ethiopic, the language of Abyssinia. The Abyssinians possess a traditional history called "The Book of the Glory of Kings" (*Kebra Nagast*), which has been translated from Ethiopic into English by Sir E. A. Wallis Budge (Oxford, 1932). It gives an account of the Queen of Sheba and her only son Menyelek I, as founders of the Abyssinian dynasty.

3265. *Provided with every requisite*: I take this to refer not only to the abundance of spices and gems and gold in her country, but to sciences and arts, and perhaps the spiritual possibilities which made her accept the religion of Unity and Truth (xxvii. 44).

24. "I found her and her people  
Worshipping the sun besides

God: <sup>3266</sup>

Satan has made their deeds  
Seem pleasing in their eyes,  
And has kept them away  
From the Path,—so  
They receive no guidance,—

۲۳- وَجَدْنَاهَا وَقَوْمَهَا يَسْجُدُونَ لِلشَّمْسِ  
وَرِجْدُونَ لِلدَّهْرِ وَكَانَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ  
أَحْمَأَ لَهُمْ فَصَدَّاهُمْ عَنِ السَّبِيلِ  
لَهُمْ لَا يَهْتَدُونَ ۝

25. "(Kept them away from the Path),  
That they should not worship  
God, Who brings to light <sup>3267</sup>  
What is hidden in the heavens  
And the earth, and knows  
What ye hide and what  
Ye reveal.

۲۵- أَلَا يَسْجُدُونَ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي  
يُخْرِجُ الْغَبَّ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ  
وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تُخْفُونَ وَمَا تُعْلِنُونَ ۝

26. "God!—there is no god  
But He!—Lord of the Throne <sup>3268</sup>  
Supreme!"

۲۶- اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ ۝

27. (Solomon) said: "Soon shall we  
See whether thou hast told  
The truth or lied! <sup>3269</sup>

۲۷- قَالِ سَنَنْظُرُ أَصَدَقْتَ  
أَمْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ ۝

3266. The ancient religion of the people of Sabāa (the Ḥimyar or Sabæans) consisted in the worship of the heavenly bodies, the sun, the planets, and the stars. Possibly the cult was connected with that of Chaldæa, the home-land of Abraham: see vi, 75-79 and notes thereon. Yemen had easy access to Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf by way of the sea, as well as with Abyssinia. That accounts for the Christians of Najrān and the Jewish dynasty of kings (e.g., Zū-Nuwās, d. 525 A.D.) who persecuted them in the century before Islam,—also for the Christian Abyssinian Governor Abrahā and his discomfiture in the year of the Prophet's birth (S. cv.), say 570 A.D. Jewish-Christian influences were powerful in Arabia in the sixth century of the Christian era.

The religion of these Sabæans (written in Arabic with a *Ṣ* and a *Ṣ*) should not be confounded with that of the Ṣabians (with a *Ṣād*), as to whom see n. 76 to ii 62.

3267. The false worship of the Sabæans is here exposed in three ways: (1) that they were self-satisfied with their own human achievements, instead of looking up to God; and (2) that the light of the heavenly bodies which they worshipped was only dependent on the true Light of God, which extends over heaven and earth; the Creator should be worshipped rather than His Creation; and (3) God knows the hidden secrets of men's minds as well as the objects which they openly profess: are false worshippers really only worshipping their own selves, or the "sins they have a mind to" and are therefore afraid to go to God, Who knows all?

3268. The messenger (Hoopoe) is a pious bird, as befits a messenger of Solomon. After mentioning the false worship of the Sabæans, he pronounces the Creed of Unity, and emphasises God's attribute as Lord of the Throne of Glory supreme, in order to make it clear that whatever may be the magnificence of a human throne such as he has described (in verse 23), he is not in any way misled from his loyalty to Solomon, the exponent of the true Religion of Unity.

3269. Solomon does not doubt his messenger's plea that he has scouted a new country, but wants to test whether he has loosened the rein of his imagination in describing its splendours or its worship.

28. "Go thou, with this letter  
Of mine, and deliver it  
To them: then draw back  
From them, and (wait to) see  
What answer they return "...

٢٨- اذْهَبْ بِكِتَابِي هَذَا فَالْقَاهُ إِلَيْهِمْ  
ثُمَّ تَوَلَّ عَنْهُمْ فَإِنظُرْ مَاذَا يَرْجِعُونَ ○

29. (The Queen) said: "Ye chiefs!  
Here is—delivered to me—  
A letter worthy of respect.

٢٩- قَالَتْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُو  
لِيَ الْبَقِيَ إِلَيَّ كِتَابٌ كَرِيمٌ ○

30. "It is from Solomon, and is  
(As follows): 'In the name<sup>3270</sup>  
Of God, Most Gracious,  
Most Merciful:

٣٠- إِنَّهُ مِنْ سُلَيْمَانَ وَإِنَّهُ  
بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ○

31. "' Be ye not arrogant  
Against me, but come  
To me in submission  
(To the true Religion).'"

٣١- أَلَا تَعْلَمُونَ أَنِّي  
عَلِيٌّ وَأَنَا نَبِيُّ مُسْلِمِينَ ○

#### SECTION 3.

32. She said: "Ye chiefs!  
Advise me in this  
My affair: no affair  
Have I decided  
Except in your presence."

٣٢- قَالَتْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُو أَفْتُونِي فِي أَمْرِي  
مَا كُنْتُ بِطَاعَةٍ أَمْرًا  
حَتَّى تَشْهَدُون ○

33. They said: "We are endued  
With strength, and given  
To vehement war:  
But the command is  
With thee; so consider  
What thou wilt command."

٣٣- قَالُوا لَوْ أَنَّا قُوَّةٌ  
وَأُولُوا بَأْسٍ شَدِيدَةٍ وَالْأَمْرُ إِلَيْكِ  
فَانظُرِي مَاذَا تَأْمُرِينَ ○

34. She said: "Kings, when they<sup>3271</sup>  
Enter a country, despoil it,

٣٤- قَالَتْ إِنَّ الْمُلُوكَ إِذَا دَخَلُوا قَرْيَةً

3270. Solomon expressly begins his letter with the formula of the true and universal Religion of Unity, and he invites to the true Faith the new people with whom he establishes honourable relations, not for worldly conquest but for the spreading of the Light of God.

3271. The character of Queen Bilqis, as disclosed here, is that of a ruler enjoying great wealth and dignity, and the full confidence of her subjects. She does nothing without consulting her Council, and her Council are ready to carry out her commands in all things. Her people are manly, loyal, and contented, and ready to take the field against any enemy of their country. But their queen is prudent in policy, and is not willing to embroil her country in war. She has the discrimination to see that Solomon is not like ordinary kings who conquer by violence. Perhaps in her heart she has a ray of the divine light already, though her people are yet Pagans. She wishes to carry her people with her in whatever she does, because she is as loyal to them as they are to her. An exchange of presents would probably establish better relations between the two kingdoms. And perhaps she anticipates some spiritual understanding also, a hope which was afterwards realised. In Bilqis we have a picture of womanhood, gentle, prudent, and able to tame the wilder passions of her subjects. She is like Una in Spenser's *Fabrie Queens*.

And make the noblest  
Of its people its meanest:  
Thus do they behave.

35. "But I am going to send  
Him a present, and (wait)  
To see with what (answer)  
Return (my) ambassadors."

36. **Now** when (the embassy) came  
To Solomon, he said:  
"Will ye give me abundance  
In wealth? But that which  
God has given me is better  
Than that which He has  
Given you! Nay it is ye  
Who rejoice in your gift!"<sup>3272</sup>

37. "Go back to them, and be sure  
We shall come to them  
With such hosts as they  
Will never be able to meet:  
We shall expel them  
From there in disgrace,  
And they will feel  
Humbled (indeed)."

38. He said (to his own men):  
"Ye Chiefs! which of you  
Can bring me her throne"<sup>3273</sup>  
Before they come to me  
In submission?"

39. Said an 'Ifrit,<sup>3274</sup> of the Jinns:  
"I will bring it to thee

أَفْسُدُوهَا وَجَعَلُوا أَعِزَّةَ أَهْلِهَا آدِلَةً  
وَكَذَلِكَ يَفْعَلُونَ ○

٣٥- وَإِنِّي مُرْسِلَةٌ إِلَيْكُمْ بِهَدِيَّةٍ  
فَنظُرْكُمْ بِمَا يُرْجِعُ الْمُرْسَلُونَ ○

٣٦- فَلَمَّا جَاءَ سُلَيْمَانَ قَالَ  
أَتُمِدُّونَ بِمَالٍ فَمَا  
أَتَيْنَ اللَّهُ خَيْرٌ مِمَّا أَتَيْتُمْ  
بَلْ أَنْتُمْ بِهَدَايَتِكُمْ تَفْرَحُونَ ○

٣٧- إِنِجْعَمَ إِلَيْكُمْ فَلَمَّا تَرَيْنَهُمْ  
مُجْتَمِعِينَ قَدْ قَبِلَ لَهُمْ بِهَا  
وَلَنُخْرِجَنَّ عَنْهَا آدِلَةً  
وَهُمْ صَغِيرُونَ ○

٣٨- قَالَ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلِكُ أَيُّكُمْ يَأْتِينِي  
بِعَرْشِهَا قَبْلَ أَنْ يَأْتُونِي مُسْلِمِينَ ○

٣٩- قَالَ عَفْرِيتٌ مِنَ الْجِنِّ أَنَا آتِيكَ بِهِ

3272. Poor Bilqis! she thought she had arranged with womanly tact to conciliate Solomon, and at the same time pacify her warlike subjects! But the effect of the embassy with presents was the very opposite. Solomon took it as an insult that she should send her presents instead of her submission to the true Religion! He flung back the presents at her, as much as to say, "Let these baubles delight your own hearts! God has blessed me with plenty of worldly goods, and something infinitely better, viz.: His Light and Guidance! Why do you say nothing about that? Will you only understand the argument of armies and violence?" Or perhaps his speech was only meant for the Sabæan crowd. For when she actually came, he treated her kindly, and she accepted the religion of Unity.

3273. The throne is symbolical of power and dignity. So far her throne was based on material wealth: Solomon is going to alter it to a basis of Faith and the Religion of Unity.

3274. 'Ifrit: a large, powerful jinn, reputed to be wicked and crafty; hence he is anxious to be recognised as one that "could be trusted".

Before thou rise from thy  
Council: indeed I have  
Full strength for the purpose,  
And may be trusted."

40. Said one who had knowledge <sup>3275</sup>

Of the Book: "I will  
Bring it to thee within  
The twinkling of an eye!"...  
Then when (Solomon) saw it  
Placed firmly before him,  
He said: "This is  
By the grace of my Lord!—<sup>3276</sup>  
To test me whether I am  
Grateful or ungrateful!  
And if any is grateful,  
Truly his gratitude is (a gain)  
For his own soul; but if  
Any is ungrateful, truly  
My Lord is Free of all Needs,  
Supreme in Honour!" <sup>3277</sup>

41. He said: "Transform her throne  
Out of all recognition by her:  
Let us see whether she  
Is guided (to the truth) <sup>3278</sup>

قَبْلَ أَنْ تَقُومَ مِنْ مَقَامِكَ  
وَلِيَّ عَلَيْهِ لَقَوِيَّ أَمِينٌ ۝

م- قَالَ الَّذِي عِنْدَهُ عِلْمٌ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ  
أَنَا آتِيكَ بِهِ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَرْتَدَّ إِلَيْكَ طَرْفُكَ  
فَلَمَّا رَأَاهُ مُسْتَقَرًّا عِنْدَهُ  
قَالَ هَذَا مِنْ فَضْلِ رَبِّي  
لِيَبْلُوَنِي أَأَشْكُرُ أَمْ أَكْفُرُ  
وَمَنْ شَكَرَ فَإِنَّمَا يَشْكُرُ لِنَفْسِهِ  
وَمَنْ كَفَرَ  
فَإِنِّي رَبِّي غَرِيبٌ كَرِيمٌ ۝

م- قَالَ نَكُونُوا لَهَا عَرْشَهَا  
نَنْظُرُ أَتَنْتَبِهِي

3275. The symbolic meaning still continues. The big 'Ifrit had boasted of his brute strength, and his reliability. But this is not enough to transform a power (throne) based on materialism into one based on inward knowledge, knowledge of the heart and spirit, the sort of knowledge that comes from the Book of the Grace of God, the spirit of truth and benevolence which is the invisible magic of men of God. Even if worldly power and common honesty may be able to effect some good, it will take a comparatively long time, while the magic of spiritual love acts instantaneously. Solomon was thankful to God that he had men endowed with such power, and he had the throne of Bilqis transported to his Court and transformed as he desired, without Bilqis even knowing it.

3276. If Solomon had been ungrateful to God, i.e., if he had worked for his own selfish or worldly ends, he could have used the brute strength of 'Ifrit to add to his worldly strength and glory. Instead of it he uses the higher magic of the Book,—of the Spirit—to transform the throne of Bilqis for her highest good, which means also the highest good of her subjects, by the divine Light. He had the two alternatives, and he chooses the better, and he thus shows his gratitude to God for the Grace He had given him.

3277. Man's gratitude to God is not a thing that benefits God, for God is high above all needs: it benefits a man's own soul and gives him higher rank in the spiritual world. *Per contra*, man's ingratitude will not detract from God's Glory and Honour or the value of God's generous gifts to man: for God is supreme in honour, glory, and generosity. *Karīm* in Arabic involves all three significations.

3278. The throne having been transformed, it will be a test to see whether Bilqis recognises it as her own and accepts it of her own free will as her own, or rejects it as something alien to her, something she will not accommodate herself to. So in our life. We get used to certain habits and customs and certain ways of thought. God's Message comes to transform us and set us on a different kind of throne, with our own active and willing consent. If we are wise, we feel honoured and grateful. If we are "obstinately rebellious", we reject it as not our own, and pine for the old slavery, as the Israelites pined for Egypt when they were under God's guidance in the wilderness.

Or is one of those who  
Receive no guidance."

42. So when she arrived,  
She was asked, "Is this  
Thy throne?" She said,  
"It was just like this; <sup>3279</sup>  
And knowledge was bestowed  
On us in advance of this,  
And we have submitted  
To God (in Islām)."

43. And he diverted her <sup>3280</sup>  
From the worship of others  
Besides God: for she was  
(Sprung) of a people  
That had no faith.

44. She was asked to enter <sup>3281</sup>  
The lofty Palace: but  
When she saw it, she  
Thought it was a lake  
Of water, and she (tucked up  
Her skirts), uncovering her legs.  
He said: "This is  
But a palace paved

أَمْ يَكُونُ مِنَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَهْتَدُونَ ○

٣٢- فَلَمَّا جَاءَتْ قِيلَ أَهَكَذَا  
عَرَّشُكَ  
قَالَتْ كَأَنَّهُ هُوَ  
وَأَوْثَيْنَا الْعِلْمَ مِن قَبْلُهَا  
وَكُنَّا مُسْلِمِينَ ○

٣٣- وَصَدَّهَا مَا كَانَتْ تَعْبُدُ مِنْ  
دُونِ اللَّهِ  
إِنَّهَا كَانَتْ مِنْ قَوْمٍ كَافِرِينَ ○

٣٤- قِيلَ لَهَا ادْخُلِي الصَّرْحَ  
فَلَمَّا رَأَتْهُ حَسِبَتْهُ لُجَّةً  
وَكَشَفَتْ عَنْ سَاقَيْهَا  
قَالَ إِنَّكَ صَرْحٌ

3279. Bilqis stands the test. She knows it was her throne, yet not exactly the same, for it was now much better. And she is proud of her good fortune, and acknowledges, for herself and her people, with gratitude, the light which was given to them by God, by which they recognised God's apostle in Solomon, and received the true Religion with all their will and heart and soul.

3280. Some Commentators and Translators adopt an alternative construction for the last clause of the last verse and the first clause of this verse. They understand the former to be spoken by Solomon and to mean, 'we had knowledge of God's Message and accepted it before her.' They understand the latter to mean, 'the worship of others besides God diverted her (from the true Religion)'. If we accept the construction adopted in this Translation, the visit to Solomon confirmed the true Faith of Bilqis and prevented her from lapsing into her ancestral false worship.

3281. The symbolic meaning takes us a stage further. But first let us take the literal story. Bilqis, having been received with honour on her arrival, and having accepted the transformation of her throne, placed presumably in an outer building of the Palace, is asked to enter the great Palace itself. Its floor was made of slabs of smooth polished glass, that glistened like water. She thought it was water, and tucked up her clothes to pass through it, showing her bare feet and ankles. This was a very undignified position for a woman, especially one of the position of a Queen. Solomon immediately undeceived her, and told her the real facts, when she felt grateful, and joined herself with Solomon in praising God.

Smooth with slabs of glass."

She said: "O my Lord!

I have indeed wronged <sup>3282</sup>

My soul: I do (now)

Submit (in Islām), with Solomon,

To the Lord of the Worlds."

لَمَّا رَأَى مِنْ قَوَارِيرِهِ  
قَالَتْ رَبِّ اِنِّى ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِى  
وَاسْلُمْتُ مَعَ سُلَيْمٰنَ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِیْنَ ۝

- C. 171.—In Ṣāliḥ's pure preaching the evil Thamūd  
(xxvii. 45-58.) Found omens of ill to themselves: in secret  
They plotted to take his life, and like cowards  
They made a league to cover their crime  
With lies. Lo! on themselves recoiled  
The plot: they perished in utter ruin.  
The men admonished by Lot were false  
To themselves: they insulted the nature given  
Them by God, and mocked the Message of Purity.  
Lo! they were buried in a shower of brimstone!

#### SECTION 4.

45. ~~We~~ sent (aforetime),  
To the Thamūd, their brother <sup>3283</sup>  
Ṣāliḥ, saying, "Serve God":  
But behold, they became  
Two factions quarrelling  
With each other.

۴۵-وَلَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا اِلٰى ثَمُوْدَ اَخَاهُمْ  
صَالِحًا اَنْ اَعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ  
فَاِذَا هُمْ فِرْقَانٍ يَمْتَحِنُ مُوْنٌ ۝

46. He said: "O my people!  
Why ask ye to hasten on

۴۶-قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ لِمَ تَسْتَعْجِلُوْنَ

3282. In symbolic language, a new entrant into the Palace of divine knowledge, may yet carry in his mind many of the illusions of the lower world. The transparent crystal of Truth he may yet mistake for the unstable water of worldly vanity, which soils the vestments of those who paddle in it. This leads to many undignified positions and mistakes. But a gentle leader points out the truth. Instead of resenting it, the new entrant is grateful; acknowledges his own mistake freely and frankly; and heartily joins with the Teacher in the worship of God, the Source of all truth and knowledge.

3283. The main story of the Thamūd, who were broken up into two factions, the rich oppressing the poor and keeping them out of the good things of life and the test case of the She-camel, will be found in xxvi. 141-159 and the notes thereon. The point here is the secret plot of the nine men against the man of God, whose teaching, they thought, brought them ill-luck; but what they called ill-luck was the just punishment from God for their own ill-deeds. Their plot was foiled, and the whole community, which was involved in evil, was destroyed.



The evil in preference to the  
good ? <sup>3284</sup>

If only ye ask for forgiveness,  
Ye may hope to receive mercy.

47. They said : " Ill omen  
Do we augur from thee  
And those that are with thee ".  
He said : " Your ill omen  
Is with God ; yea, ye are  
A people under trial." <sup>3285</sup>

48. There were in the City  
Nine men of a family,  
Who made mischief in the land,  
And would not reform. <sup>3286</sup>

49. They said : " Swear  
A mutual oath by God  
That we shall make  
A secret night attack  
On him and his people, <sup>3287</sup>  
And that we shall then  
Say to his heir (when he  
Seeks vengeance) : ' We were not  
Present at the slaughter  
Of his people, and we are  
Positively telling the truth '."

بِالسَّيِّئَةِ قَبْلَ الْحَسَنَةِ  
لَوْلَا تَسْتَغْفِرُونَ اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ ○

۴۷- قَالُوا أَظُنُّكَ نَابِكَ وَبَيْنَ مَعَكَ  
قَالَ ظَنُّكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ  
بَلْ أَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ تُفْتَنُونَ ○

۴۸- وَكَانَ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ تِسْعَةُ رَهْطٍ  
يُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا يُصْلِحُونَ ○

۴۹- قَالُوا تَقَاسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ  
لَنَنبِتَنَّهُ وَأَهْلَهُ  
ثُمَّ لَنَقُولَنَّ لِوَلِيِّهِ مَا شَهِدْنَا مَنَهِلَكَ  
أَهْلَهُ  
وَرَأَيْنَا لَصِيفُونَ ○

3284. Cf. xiii. 6. The evil-doers were really hastening on their own punishment by their feuds against the poor. The advocates of justice were not bringing ill-luck to them. They were showing the way to ward it off. Their own injustice was bringing on their disaster.

3285. All evil unpunished is not evil condoned, but evil given a chance for reform. They are on trial, by the mercy of God. What they call " ill omen " is really the just punishment for their ill-deeds, and that punishment rests with God.

3286. They had made up their minds to wage a relentless war against justice. They did not destroy justice, but justice destroyed them.

3287. A most dastardly plot, because (1) it was to be secret, (2) by night, (3) taking their victims unawares, and (4) because careful provision was made that they should all tell lies together, saying that they knew nothing about it, in order to evade the vengeance which ʿAlī's heirs (if any were left) or his tribe might want to exact ! And yet such were exactly the plots laid against the holy Prophet himself.

50. They plotted and planned,<sup>3288</sup>  
But We too planned,  
Even while they perceived it not.

51. Then see what was the end  
Of their plot!—this,  
That We destroyed them  
And their people, all (of them).

52. Now such were their houses,—  
In utter ruin,—because  
They practised wrong-doing.  
Verily in this is a Sign  
For people of knowledge.

53. And We saved those  
Who believed and practised  
Righteousness.

54. (~~We~~ also sent) Lūt<sup>3289</sup>  
(As an apostle): behold,  
He said to his people,  
“Do ye do what is shameful  
Though ye see (its iniquity)?

55. Would ye really approach men  
In your lusts rather than  
Women? Nay, ye are  
A people (grossly) ignorant!<sup>3290</sup>

56. But his people gave  
No other answer but this:  
They said, “Drive out

٥٠- وَ مَكَرُوا مَكْرًا وَ مَكَرْنَا مَكْرًا  
وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ○

٥١- فَأَنْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ مَكْرِهِمْ  
أَلَا ذُكِّرْنَاهُمْ وَقَوْمَهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ○

٥٢- فَتِلْكَ بُيُوتُهُمْ خَاوِيَةً بِمَا ظَلَمُوا  
إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ○

٥٣- وَأَنْجَيْنَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَكَانُوا يَتَّقُونَ ○

٥٤- وَلُوطًا إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ  
أَتَأْتُونَ الْفَاحِشَةَ  
وَأَنْتُمْ تَبْهَرُونَ ○

٥٥- أَلَيْسَ لَكُمُ الْعِزَّةُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ فَشَقُوا  
دُونَ النِّسَاءِ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ مُّجْهَلُونَ ○

٥٦- فَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهِ إِلَّا  
أَنْ قَالُوا أَخْرِجُوهُ

3288. Cf. iii. 54. Their secret plotting is all known to God, but of God's just and beneficent plans they know nothing. And the wicked must come to an evil end.

3289. The story of Lūt is referred to elsewhere. The passages to which reference may be made here are: xxvi. 160-175, and vii. 80-84. But the point emphasized here is that the crime of the Cities of the Plain was against their own nature, and they saw its enormity, and yet they indulged in it. Can degradation go further? His wife was not apparently a Believer. Her previous sympathy with the sinful people “destined her” (verse 57 below) to a miserable end, as she lagged behind and shared in the destruction of her kinsfolk.

3290. The ignorance referred to here is the spiritual Ignorance, the Ignorance of how grossness and sins that bring shame on their own physical and moral nature are doomed to destroy them: it is their own loss. That they knew the iniquity of their sins has already been stated in the last verse. That knowledge makes their spiritual Ignorance all the more culpable, just as a man consciously deceiving people by half-truths is a greater liar than a man who tells lies inadvertently.

The followers of Lūt from  
Your city: these are  
Indeed men who want  
To be clean and pure!" 3291

أَلْ لُّوطٌ مِّنْ قُرَيْبِكُمْ  
إِنَّهُمْ أَنَاسٌ يَّتَطَهَّرُونَ ○

57. But We saved him  
And his family, except  
His wife: her We destined  
To be of those  
Who lagged behind.

هـ- فَأَنْجَيْنَاهُ وَأَهْلَهُ إِلَّا امْرَأَتَهُ  
فَكَانَ مِنَ الْغَابِرِينَ ○

58. And We rained down on them  
A shower (of brimstone):  
And evil was the shower  
On those who were admonished  
(But heeded not)!

هـ- وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مَطَرًا  
مَّسَاءً مَّطَرُ الْمُنْذَرِينَ ○

C. 172.—God's goodness and mercy are manifest  
(xxvii. 59-93.) Through all nature and in the heart and conscience  
Of man. He alone knows all: our knowledge  
Can at best be partial. Yet we can travel  
Through space and time and see how Evil  
Never prospered. God teaches us good,  
But how can we see if we make ourselves blind?  
At the end of all things shall we know how small  
Is our state, but for God's Grace: let us bow  
To His Will and accept His true guidance:  
Let us praise Him and trust Him—now and for ever!

#### SECTION 5.

59. Say: Praise be to God,  
And Peace on His servants 3292  
Whom He has chosen  
(For His Message). (Who)  
Is better?—God or  
19 The false gods they associate  
30 (With Him)?

هـ- قُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ وَسَلَامٌ عَلَى عِبَادِهِ  
الَّذِينَ اصْطَفَى  
اللَّهُ خَيْرٌ أَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ○

3291. Cf. vii. 82-84. Instead of being ashamed on account of the consciousness of their own guilt, they attack the pure ones with their sarcasms, as if not they but the pure ones were in the wrong in trying to set them on the right way.

3292. God's revelation having been described as Light, Guidance, and Mercy, we ought all to be grateful to God for vouchsafing His revelation. We ought also to appreciate the services of God's Messengers, who are chosen to deliver His Message: we ought to send salutations of Peace on them, instead of plotting, as the wicked do, for their removal or persecution, or banishment or death. For these men of God undergo every kind of hardship and forego every kind of advantage or pleasure in life for serving mankind. And God is truth and goodness, and all our fancies of false worship are falsehoods and evils. Shall we prefer falsehood and evil to truth and goodness?

60. Or, who has created <sup>3293</sup>  
The heavens and the earth,  
And who sends you down  
Rain from the sky ?  
Yea, with it We cause  
To grow well-planted orchards  
Full of beauty and delight :  
It is not in your power  
To cause the growth <sup>3294</sup>  
Of the trees in them. (Can there be  
Another) god besides God ?  
Nay, they are a people  
Who swerve from justice.

۞-۶۰-۱۰ اَمَّنْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ  
وَاَنْزَلَ لَكُمْ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَآءً  
فَاَنْتُمْ تَنْتَابُهُ حَدَّثَ اَيْنَ ذَاتِ فَجْوةٍ  
مَا كَانَ لَكُمْ اَنْ تُفْسِدُوْا اَشْجَرَهَا  
عَالِمٌ مَعَ اللّٰهِ  
بَلْ هُمْ قَوْمٌ يَعْبُدُوْنَ ۝

61. Or, who has made the earth  
Firm to live in ; made  
Rivers in its midst ; set  
Thereon mountains immovable ; <sup>3295</sup>  
And made a separating bar  
Between the two bodies <sup>3296</sup>  
Of flowing water ?  
(Can there be another) god  
Besides God ? Nay, most  
Of them know not.

۞-۶۱-۱۰ اَمَّنْ جَعَلَ الْاَرْضَ قَرَارًا  
وَجَعَلَ جِلْلَالَهَا اَنْهَارًا وَجَعَلَ لَهَا تَوَابِيْعَ  
وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ حَاجِزًا  
عَالِمٌ مَعَ اللّٰهِ  
بَلْ اَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ۝

62. Or, who listens to the (soul)  
Distressed when it calls  
On Him, and who relieves <sup>3297</sup>  
Its suffering, and makes you

۞-۶۲-۱۰ اَمَّنْ يُّجِيبُ الْمُضْطَرَّ اِذَا دَعَاہُ  
وَيَكْشِفُ السُّوْءَ وَيَجْعَلُ لَكُمْ

3293. The order, beauty, and grandeur of the Universe are appealed to. They show unity of design and purpose—How can unjust, ignorant, foolish, heedless, false men think of a multiplicity of gods, or of any god besides the One True God ?

3294. To make a single seed germinate and grow into a tree is beyond man's power. When it comes to a great well-laid-out garden of beauty and delight, no one would think it grew up of itself without a Gardener's consummate art. And the orchard is more than the trees in it : there is design and beauty in their arrangement : proper spaces have to be left between them for the growth of their roots, for the aeration of the soil beneath them, and for the penetration of air and sunlight between their branches. How can anyone then think of the wonderful Universe as a whole, without thinking of the far higher Unity of Design, the evidence of the One True God ?

3295. Cf. xvi. 15 and notes 2038 and 2039. The *terra firma*, the flowing water, and the cycle of water circulation—sea, vapour, clouds, rain, rivers, and sea again,—all one and yet all distinct, with a sort of wonderful barrier between salt water and fresh water ; can man see all this and yet be ignorant of God ?

3296. Cf. xxv. 53 and notes 3111 and 3112.

3297. Besides the evidence of external nature, there is the still more intimate evidence in man's inner conscience and heart. God listens to man's cry of agony and relieves his suffering, and He has given him superiority over other creation on this earth, through his mind and soul. Is man then going to run after inferior beings and forget God ?

- (Mankind) inheritors of the  
earth? <sup>3298</sup>  
(Can there be another) god  
Besides God? Little it is  
That ye heed!

خَلْقَاءَ الْأَرْضِ  
عِلَّاهُ مَعَ اللَّهِ  
فَلْيَسْلُ مَا تَنْكَرُونَ

63. Or, who guides you  
Through the depths of darkness  
On land and sea, and who  
Sends the winds as heralds <sup>3299</sup>  
Of glad tidings, going before  
His Mercy? (Can there be  
Another) god besides God?—  
High is God above what  
They associate with Him!

۶۳- أَمْ مَنْ يَهْدِيكُمْ فِي ظُلُمَاتِ الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ  
وَمَنْ يُرْسِلُ الرِّيحَ بُشْرًا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ  
رَحْمَتِهِ  
عِلَّاهُ مَعَ اللَّهِ  
تَعْلَى اللَّهُ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ

64. Or, who originates Creation,  
Then repeats it, <sup>3300</sup>  
And who gives you sustenance  
From heaven and earth? <sup>3301</sup>  
(Can there be another) god  
Besides God? Say, "Bring forth  
Your argument, if ye  
Are telling the truth!" <sup>3302</sup>

۶۴- أَمْ مَنْ يَبْدَأُ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ  
وَمَنْ يُزِيلُ فَكْرًا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ  
عِلَّاهُ مَعَ اللَّهِ  
قُلْ مَا هَؤُلَاءُ إِلَّا كَلِمَاتٌ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ

65. Say: None in the heavens  
Or on earth, except God,  
Knows what is hidden: <sup>3303</sup>  
Nor can they perceive  
When they shall be raised  
Up (for Judgment).

۶۵- قُلْ لَا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ  
وَالْأَرْضِ الْغَيْبَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ  
وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ يُبْعَثُونَ

66. Still less can their knowledge  
Comprehend the Hereafter: nay,

۶۶- بَلْ أَتَاكَ عَلَيْهِمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ بَل

3298. Cf. vi. 165, n. 988.

3299. Cf. xxv. 48, n. 3104. After external nature, our attention was drawn to our inner consciousness; after that, it is drawn here to our social and collective life, in which we use the forces of nature for international intercourse, trade, agriculture, production, and economic well-being generally. In the next verse, we are asked to contemplate creation from its primeval stages, through its intermediate processes, to the final Destiny in a new Creation—a new heaven and a new earth.

3300. Cf. x. 34, and n. 1428.

3301. Sustenance: of course in the spiritual as well as the material sense.

3302. All the arguments point to the Unity of God: there is none whatever against it.

3303. The existence of God is certain. But nothing else can be known with certainty to our knowledge. He has told us of the Hereafter, and therefore we know it is true. But those who do not believe in God,—what knowledge or certainty can they have? Even when it is actually coming, they will not have the sense to perceive it.

They are in doubt and uncertainty  
Thereant; nay, they are blind  
Thereunto! <sup>3304</sup>

### SECTION 6.

67. **THE** Unbelievers say: "What!  
When we become dust,—  
We and our fathers,—shall we  
Really be raised (from the dead)?"

68. "It is true we were promised  
This,—we and our fathers  
Before (us): these are nothing  
But tales of the ancients."

69. Say: "Go ye through the earth  
And see what has been  
The end of those guilty  
(Of sin)." <sup>3305</sup>

70. But grieve not over them,  
Nor distress thyself  
Because of their plots. <sup>3306</sup>

71. **THEY** also say: "When will  
This promise (come to pass)?  
(Say) if ye are truthful."

72. Say: "It may be that  
Some of the events which  
Ye wish to hasten on  
May be (close) in your pursuit!" <sup>3307</sup>

لَا يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ  
بَلْ هُمْ فِي شَكٍّ مِنْهَا ۖ  
بَلْ هُمْ كَافِرُونَ ۝

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِذَا كُنَّا تُرَابًا  
وَأَبَآؤُنَا أَهْلُ آيَاتِكُمْ نُحْيَوْنَ ۝

لَقَدْ وَعَدْنَا هَٰذَا نَحْنُ وَآبَآؤُنَا  
مِنْ قَبْلُ إِنَّ هَٰذَا إِلَّا أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ۝

ۖ قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ  
كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُجْرِمِينَ ۝

ۚ وَلَا تَحْزَنْ عَلَيْهِمْ  
وَلَا تَكُن فِي ضَيْقٍ مِمَّا يَنْتَكِبُونَ ۝

ۚ وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَى هَٰذَا الْوَعْدُ  
إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ۝

ۚ قُلْ عَلَىٰ أَن يَكُونُ  
رَدْفُ لَكُمْ بَعْضُ الَّذِي تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ ۝

3304. The Unbelievers are generally materialists, who cannot go beyond the evidence of their physical senses. As to a spiritual vision of the future, their physical senses would only leave them in doubt and uncertainty, while their rejection of the spiritual Light makes them blind altogether to the spiritual world.

3305. Even if the Unbelievers are unwilling to take any mystic doctrine, they have only to observe what has actually happened on the earth, and they will see that evil always came to an evil end, and that Truth and righteousness ultimately won.

3306. Cf. xvi. 127, and n. 2164. The righteous need not worry over the unjust. The plots of the unjust can never defeat or deflect the purpose of God.

3307. The Unbelievers—or even men of half-hearted faith—may say, "Why worry over distant future events? Take the day as it comes!" But that is a fallacy. Judgment is certain, and it may be that this very hour may be the hour of doom for any given individual. This is the hour of repentance and amendment. For God wishes well to all mankind in spite of their ingratitude.

73. But verily thy Lord is  
Full of grace to mankind:  
Yet most of them are ungrateful.
74. And verily thy Lord knoweth  
All that their hearts do hide,  
As well as all that  
They reveal.
75. Nor is there aught  
Of the Unseen, in heaven  
Or earth, but is (recorded) <sup>3308</sup>  
In a clear record.
76. Verily this Qur-an doth explain  
To the Children of Israel  
Most of the matters  
In which they disagree. <sup>3309</sup>
77. And it certainly is  
A Guide and a Mercy  
To those who believe.
78. Verily thy Lord will decide  
Between them by His Decree: <sup>3310</sup>  
And He is Exalted in Might,  
All-Knowing.
79. So put thy trust in God:  
For thou art on (the Path  
Of) manifest Truth.
- ٤٣- وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى النَّاسِ  
وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ○
- ٤٤- وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَيَعْلَمُ مَا تُكِنُّ صُدُورُهُمْ  
وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ ○
- ٤٥- وَمَا مِنْ غَائِبَةٍ فِي السَّمَاءِ  
وَالْأَرْضِ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ ○
- ٤٦- وَإِنَّ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ لَيَقْضِي عَلَى بَيْنِهِ  
إِنَّ شَاءَ نَبْلُ أَكْثَرُ الَّذِي هُمْ فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ ○
- ٤٧- وَإِنَّهُ لَهْدَىٰ وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ○
- ٤٨- إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَقْضِي بَيْنَهُم بِحُكْمِهِ  
وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْعَلِيمُ ○
- ٤٩- فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ  
إِنَّكَ عَلَى الْبَحْرِ الْمُبِينِ ○

3308. The chain of cause and effect is certain and clear. We stand or fall by our record. In this sense the doctrine of "Karma" is true, but it needs to be modified by the doctrine of "Grace"; for man may repent and obtain God's Mercy, and God's Mercy is like a good angel always trying to reclaim man.

3309. The Jews had numerous sects. Some were altogether out of the pale, e.g., the Samaritans, who had a separate *Taurāt* of their own: they hated the other Jews and were hated by them. But even in the orthodox body, there were several sects, of which the following may be mentioned: (1) the Pharisees, who were literalists, formalists, and fatalists, and had a large body of traditional literature, with which they overlaid the Law of Moses; (2) the Sadducees, who were rationalists, and seemed to have doubted the doctrine of the Resurrection or of a Hereafter; (3) the Essenes, who practised a sort of Communism and Asceticism and prohibited marriage. About many of their doctrines they had bitter disputes, which were settled by the Qur-an, which supplemented and perfected the Law of Moses. It also explained clearly the nature of God and of Revelation, and the doctrine of the Hereafter.

3310. *Decree: hukm*; the disputes between rival sects can only be settled by the Decree of God,—(1) in the form of a Revelation, as was done by the Qur-an, or (2) by the logic of events, for hundreds of sects have been extinguished and forgotten in the course of time, and (3) in the Decree of judgment in the Hereafter, when all jarring sects will at length see their errors.

80. Truly thou canst not cause  
The Dead to listen, nor  
Canst thou cause the Deaf  
To hear the call,  
(Especially) when they  
Turn back in retreat.<sup>3311</sup>

٨٠- لَئِكَ لَا تَسْمِعُ التَّوَلَّى  
وَلَا تَسْمِعُ السَّمْعَ الدَّاعَى  
لِذَا وَلَوْا مُدَّ يَرْوَنَ ○

81. Nor canst thou be a guide  
To the Blind, (to prevent them)  
From straying: only those  
Wilt thou get to listen  
Who believe in Our Signs,  
And they will bow in Islam.

٨١- وَكَأَنْتَ بِهْدَى الْعَمَى عَنْ صَلَاتِهِمْ  
إِنْ تَسْمِعُ إِلَّا  
مَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِآيَاتِنَا فَهُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ ○

82. And when the Word is<sup>3312</sup>  
Fulfilled against them (the unjust),  
We shall produce from the earth  
A Beast to (face) them:<sup>3313</sup>  
He will speak to them,  
For that mankind did not  
Believe with assurance  
In Our Signs.

٨٢- وَإِذَا وَقَعَ الْقَوْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ  
أَخْرَجْنَا لَهُمْ دَابَّةً مِّنَ الْأَرْضِ  
تُكَلِّمُهُمْ أَنَّ النَّاسَ  
كَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا لَا يُوقِنُونَ ○

#### SECTION 7.

83. One Day We shall gather  
Together from every people  
A troop of those who reject  
Our Signs, and they shall  
Be kept in ranks,—

٨٣- وَيَوْمَ نَخْشُرُ مِنْ كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ  
فَوْجًا مِّنْهُمْ يَكِيدُ بِآيَاتِنَا  
فَهُمْ يُؤْخَذُونَ ○

84. Until, when they come  
(Before the Judgment-seat),  
(God) will say: "Did ye  
Reject My Signs, though ye"<sup>3314</sup>

٨٤- حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءُوا  
قَالَ أَكْذَبْتُمْ بِآيَاتِي وَلَمْ

3311. The Apostle's responsibility was to preach and show the way. Men and women of good-will had faith and accepted the Message. But he was not responsible for the obstinacy and perversity of men who turned away from God's Signs and rejected the Truth.

3312. *The Word*: the Decree or Sentence, the Decision to end the respite and restore the true values of right and wrong in a new world: their cup of iniquity will then have been full.

3313. The Beast will be one of the Signs of the Last Days to come, before the present World passes away and the new World is brought into being. In symbolic language it would represent gross Materialism. It will be the embodiment of fat worldly triumph, which will appeal to a misguided and degenerate world, because such a corrupt world will have no assured belief in the Signs of God or in spiritual Light. It will itself be a Sign or Portent, closing the door of repentance. I do not know whether this Beast has any reference to the symbolism in chapter xii of the Book of Revelation, which closes the New Testament, If *taklimuhum* is read instead of *tukallimuhum*, it would mean that the Beast would wound them; symbolically, that Materialism would produce its own Nemesis.

3314. The charge against them will be: 'You had no knowledge, and yet you arrogantly rejected my Signs: is that true, or have you any plea in your defence?'



Comprehended them not  
In knowledge, or what  
Was it ye did?"

لَمْ يَحْصِلُوا بِهَا عِلْمًا أَمْ كُنْتُمْ  
تَعْمَلُونَ ○

85. And the Word will be<sup>3315</sup>  
Fulfilled against them, because  
Of their wrong-doing, and they  
Will be unable to speak  
(In plea).

هـ-وَوَقَعَ الْقَوْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ بِمَا  
فَكَرُوا اللَّهُ لَا يَنْطَلِقُونَ ○

86. See they not that We  
Have made the Night  
For them to rest in  
And the Day to give<sup>3316</sup>  
Them light? Verily in this  
Are Signs for any people  
That believe!

هـ-الْقَرِيبُوا أَكَا جَعَلْنَا اللَّيْلَ  
لِيَسْكُنُوا فِيهَا وَالنَّهَارَ مُبْصِرًا  
لِيَكُنْ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ○

87. And the Day that the Trumpet  
Will be sounded—then will be  
Smitten with terror those  
Who are in the heavens,  
And those who are on earth,  
Except such as God will please  
(To exempt): and all shall come  
To His (Presence) as beings  
Conscious of their lowliness.<sup>3317</sup>

هـ-وَيَوْمَ يُنْفَخُ فِي الصُّورِ  
تُفْجَرُ مِنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَنْ فِي  
الْأَرْضِ  
إِلَّا مَنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ  
وَكُلٌّ أَتَوْهُ ذُخْرِينَ ○

88. Thou seest the mountains  
And thinkest them firmly fixed:<sup>3318</sup>  
But they shall pass away  
As the clouds pass away:

هـ-وَتَرَى الْجِبَالَ تَحْسَبُهَا جَامِدًا  
وَهُمْ تَكُونُ مَوَ تَسَالِبٌ ○

3315. There will be no plea, because the charge will be only too true. The Decree will be passed and executed.

3316. *Night, Day, Rest, and Light*: both in the literal and the symbolic sense. Anyone with a scrap of faith or spiritual insight could see that the Night is a blessing when used for rest and a curse when used to cover ignorance or sin; and that the Day is for work and enlightenment, and its misuse is gross ingratitude to God. Or, understand Truth and practise Righteousness while it is yet Light and the Message of God is here to guide you: for there comes the Night when Endeavour will cease and there will be no room for Repentance.

3317. Arrogance will flee with Ignorance, and Self will see itself in its true place—that of humility and lowliness—when the scales of ignorance fall from its eyes.

3318. This is so in the present phase of phenomenal things, both literally and figuratively. There seems nothing more firm or fixed or permanent than the "eternal hills": yet when the new order of things comes and the new World is brought into being, they will be as *simay* and unsubstantial as clouds. So, in the revaluation of things in the spiritual World, persons or things or ideas that seem so great and so firmly established now will pass away like mere fancies and give way to the Reality of God.

(Such is) the artistry of God,  
Who disposes of all things<sup>3319</sup>  
In perfect order: for He is  
Well acquainted with all that ye do.

صَلَّمَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي أَنْشَأَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ  
لَهُ خَيْرٌ لِمَا تَفْعَلُونَ

89. If any do good, good will  
(Accrue) to them therefrom;  
And they will be secure  
From terror that Day.

۸۹- مَنْ جَاءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهُ خَيْرٌ مِنْهَا  
وَهُمْ فِي قَرْعِ يَوْمِئِذٍ أَمْنُونَ

90. And if any do evil,  
Their faces will be thrown  
Headlong into the Fire: <sup>3320</sup>  
"Do ye receive a reward  
Other than that which ye  
Have earned by your deeds?" <sup>3321</sup>

۹۰- وَمَنْ جَاءَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَكَيْتٌ وَجْهُهُ  
فِي النَّارِ هَلْ يُجْزَوْنَ  
إِلَّا مَا كَسَبُوا بِعَمَلِهِمْ

91. For me, I have been  
Commanded to serve the Lord <sup>3322</sup>  
Of this City, Him Who has  
Sanctified it and to Whom  
(Belong) all things:  
And I am commanded  
To be of those who bow  
In Islam to God's Will,—

۹۱- إِنَّمَا أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ رَبَّ  
هَذِهِ الْبَلَدِ الَّذِي حَكَمَهَا  
وَلَهُ كُلُّ شَيْءٍ  
وَأُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

92. And to rehearse the Qur-an: <sup>3323</sup>  
And if any accept guidance,

۹۲- وَأَنْ أَتْلُو الْقُرْآنَ فَمَنِ اهْتَدَى

3319. *Atqana*: to arrange or dispose of things with art, or so as to obtain the most perfect results. The present phenomenal world and the Future that is to be, all have a definite object and purpose in the Plan of God, Who knows perfectly what we are, what we do, what we think, and what we need. Who can praise His artistry enough?

3320. *Headlong*: it may be that the very things of which we were proudest, which we considered foremost in our present order of the world, will be the first to go into the Fire, as they are but the window-dressing (= faces) of Evil.

3321. There will be no punishment except such as has been deserved by actual conduct in the present life of probation.

3322. *The Lord of this City*. This was spoken in Mecca, say about the 5th year before the Hijrat, when the holy Prophet and his adherents were being persecuted as enemies to the cult of Mecca. So far from being against the true spirit of the holy City of Mecca, it was actually in furtherance of that spirit, which had been overlaid by the idolatries and abominations of the Pagan Quraish. They are told that the new Teaching is from the Lord of Mecca itself, the One True God, Who had sanctified it in the time of Abraham. Lest they should think that it was a local or tribal or narrow cult, it is added that He is not only Lord of this City, but Lord of the World; "to Whom belong all things". It is a universal message; but how sad it would be if the Meccans, among whom it came first, were to reject it?

3323. The duty of the Apostle and his adherents was, first, to accept Islam and become themselves shining examples of God's grace and mercy, as they in fact were, and secondly, to preach that message and spread that Light to all around. It was not for them to force it on unwilling people: for any who rejected it would find their own spiritual loss in such rejection. But they must clearly warn them of the consequences.

They do it for the good  
Of their own souls,  
And if any stray, say:  
"I am only a Warner".

93. And say: "Praise be to God,  
Who will soon show you<sup>3324</sup>  
His Signs, so that ye  
Shall know them"; and thy Lord  
Is not unmindful  
Of all that ye do.<sup>3325</sup>

فَالْمَا يَهْتَدِي لِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ ضَلَّ فَقُلْ  
إِنَّمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُنذِرِينَ ○

٩٣- وَقُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ سَيُرِيكُمْ  
آيَاتِهِ فَتَعْرِفُونَهَا  
وَمَا رَبُّكَ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ۝



3324. In a few years after that, many wonderful things happened that removed the doubts of the doubters and confirmed the faith of the Believers. They showed how the logic of events proved the true mission of the holy Prophet. Other things some minds may not be able to grasp. But the logic of events is for all to see.

3325. Trials and tribulations, persecution and exile, and the patient endurance and constancy with which they were met by the Believers—all are known to God and will be credited to their spiritual account.

INTRODUCTION TO SŪRA XXVIII (*Qasas*).

This Sūra continues the subject of Revelation and its reception by those to whom it is sent. But it emphasises new points: how the recipient of inspiration is prepared for his high destiny, even in the growth of his ordinary life, and how the rejection of God's Message by groups of men or by individuals is caused by overweening arrogance or avarice. The plight of those who reject the Truth is contrasted with the reward of the righteous.

With the possible exception of a few verses, it belongs to the late Meccan period, just preceding the Hijrat.

*Summary.*

Pharaoh was arrogant and unjust, but God's Plan was to strengthen the weak: in infancy Moses was prepared for his mission; in youth he trusted in the Lord and was guided; in his exile he found help and love; and when he was called, he was supported by God (xxviii. 1-42, and C. 173).

So was the holy Apostle Muḥammad fed spiritually by God's Grace, and his Revelation was recognised by those who knew the earlier Revelations: it came to an old and sacred Centre, to warn those seduced by this world's life (xxviii. 43-60, and C. 174).

The Future is with those who repent, have faith, and do good: for all Mercy and Truth are with God (xxviii. 61-75, and C. 175).

But men puffed up with wealth, like Qārūn, will come to an evil end, while the lowly and the righteous will attain God's Mercy (xxviii. 76-88, C. 176).

C. 173.—God's Apostles are men, and win through good life

(xxviii. 1-42.) By God's Grace and their Faith. So Moses  
 Was saved from the Tyrant's wrath in infancy,  
 And reared in the Tyrant's own den, but gently  
 In a mother's love. In youth was he endowed  
 With wisdom and knowledge, strength and the will  
 To do right. In sorrow or misfortune  
 He trusted in God and opened his heart  
 To Him. In self-imposed exile he won  
 Love by his chivalry and confidence by Truth.  
 In his mission he triumphed over arrogant  
 Wrong by his meekness, patience, and Faith.  
 So good follows good, and Evil must fall,  
 Cursed, loathed, disgraced, and despised.

## Sūra XXVIII.

*Qaṣaṣ, or the Narration.**In the name of God, Most Gracious,  
Most Merciful.*1. **Ha. Sin. Mim.** <sup>3326</sup>2. These are Verses of the Book  
That makes (things) clear. <sup>3327</sup>3. We rehearse to thee some  
Of the story of Moses  
And Pharaoh in Truth,  
For people who believe. <sup>3328</sup>4. **Al**ruly Pharaoh elated himself  
In the land and broke up  
Its people into sections, <sup>3329</sup>  
Depressing a small group  
Among them: their sons he slew,  
But he kept alive their females:  
For he was indeed  
A maker of mischief.5. And We wished to be  
Gracious to those who were  
Being depressed in the land, <sup>3330</sup>  
To make them leaders (in faith)  
And make them heirs,

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

١- طسّم

٢- تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ

٣- نَتْلُو عَلَيْكَ مِنْ نَحْنُ مُوسَى  
وَفِرْعَوْنَ بِأَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيمٍ٤- إِنَّ فِرْعَوْنَ عَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَجَعَلَ  
أَهْلَهَا أَشْيَاعًا يُسْتَضْعَفُ طَائِفَةٌ  
مِنْهُمْ يَذْخَرُونَ أَمْ نَكُونُ لِلنِّسَاءِ مُنْجَبِينَ  
لَهُنَّ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُسْتَضْعَفِينَ٥- وَنُرِيدُ أَنْ نَمُنَّ عَلَى الَّذِينَ  
اسْتُضِعُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَنَجْعَلَهُمْ أَئِمَّةً  
وَنَجْعَلَهُمُ الْوَارِثِينَ

3326. See n. 3137 to xxvi. 1.

3327. See n. 3138 to xxvi. 2.

3328. The part of the story of Moses told here is how Moses and his mother were guided in the child's infancy, that even as he grew up, he might be prepared for his high destiny; how in youth he trusted God in the most awkward situations and sought His help; how he fled into exile, and yet found love and support because of his well-doing; and how, when he was called to his mission, he received God's favour, which defeated all the plots of his enemies. Thus God's Plan works continuously in the web of events which the Fates are supposed to be weaving. Those who have faith will thus see the hand of God in everything, and welcome the light that comes to them by Revelation. With such a Faith there is no room for Chance or blind Fate.

3329. For a king or ruler to make invidious distinctions between his subjects, and specially to depress or oppress any particular class of his subjects, is a dereliction of his kingly duties, for which he is responsible to God. Pharaoh and his clique were intoxicated with pride of race and pride of material civilization, and grievously oppressed the Israelites. Pharaoh decreed that all male sons born to his Israelite subjects should be killed, and the females kept alive for the pleasure of the Egyptians. Moses was saved in a wonderful way, as related further.

3330. What Pharaoh wished was to crush them. But God's Plan was to protect them as they were weak, and indeed to make them custodians and leaders in His Faith, and to give them in inheritance a land "flowing with milk and honey". Here they were established in authority for such time as they followed God's Law. As regards Pharaoh and his ministers and hosts, they were to be shown that they would suffer, at the hands of the Israelites, the very calamities against which they were so confidently taking precautions for themselves.

6. To establish a firm place  
For them in the land,  
And to show Pharaoh, Hāmān,<sup>3331</sup>  
And their hosts, at their hands,  
The very things against which  
They were taking precautions.<sup>3332</sup>

٤- وَنَسَكُنَ لَهُمُ الْاَرْضَ  
وَنُزِعَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامَانَ وَجُنُودَهُمَا  
مِنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوا يَحْتَرُونَ ○

7. So We sent this inspiration  
To the mother of Moses:  
"Suckle (thy child), but when  
Thou hast fears about him,  
Cast him into the river,<sup>3333</sup>  
But fear not nor grieve:  
For We shall restore him  
To thee, and We shall make  
Him one of Our apostles."

٥- وَاَوْحَيْنَا اِلَى امِّ مُوسَى  
اَنْ اَرْضِعِيْهِ ۖ فَاِذَا خِفْتِ عَلَيْهِ  
فَالْقِمِيْهِ فِي الْيَنْبَغِ وَلَا تَحْزَنِيْ  
اِنَّا سَرَّآدُوْهُ اِلَيْكَ وَجَاعِلُوْهُ مِنَ  
الرُّسُلِيْنَ ○

8. Then the people of Pharaoh  
Picked him up (from the river) :  
(It was intended) that (Moses)  
Should be to them an adversary  
And a cause of sorrow :<sup>3334</sup>  
For Pharaoh and Hāmān  
And (all) their hosts were  
Men of sin.

٨- فَالْتَقَطَهُ اِلَ فِرْعَوْنَ  
لِيَكُوْنَ لَهُمْ عَدُوًّا وَحَزَنًا  
اِنَّ فِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامَانَ  
وَجُنُودَهُمَا كَانُوْا خٰطِيْنَ ○

9. The wife of Pharaoh said :  
" (Here is) a joy of the eye,<sup>3335</sup>  
For me and for thee :  
Slay him not. It may be

٩- وَقَالَتِ امْرَاَتُ فِرْعَوْنَ قُوْتُ عَيْنٍ  
لِّيْ وَلَكَ لَا تَقْتُلُوْهُ ۖ

3331. Hāmān was evidently Pharaoh's minister, not to be confounded with a Hāmān who is mentioned in the Old Testament (Esther iii. 1), as a minister of Ahasuerus (Xerxes) King of Persia, the same who invaded Greece, and ruled from B.C. 485 to 464.

3332. Pharaoh was trying to kill the Israelites. Instead, the Plagues of Egypt, invoked by Moses, killed thousands of Egyptians (vii. 133, and notes 1091-2), because "they were steeped in arrogance,—a people given to sin." In pursuing the Israelites in their flight, Pharaoh and his army were themselves overwhelmed in the sea.

3333. The Egyptian midwives had orders to kill Israelite babes. Moses was saved from them, and his mother nursed the infant at her breast herself. But when the danger of discovery was imminent, she put him into a chest or basket, and floated him on the river Nile. It flowed by the King's palace, and the chest with the baby was picked up, as related further on. The mother had no cause to fear or grieve afterwards, as the child grew up under her tender care and became afterwards one of the apostles of God.

3334. This was the Plan of Providence : that the wicked might cast a net round themselves by fostering the man who was to bring them to naught and be the instrument of their punishment,—or (looking at it from the other side) that Moses might learn all the wisdom of the Egyptians in order to expose all that was hollow and wicked in it.

3335. He was a darling to look at, and Pharaoh had apparently no son, but only a daughter, who afterwards shared his throne. This is on the supposition that the Pharaoh was Thothmes I (see Appendix IV, S. vii).

That he will be of use:  
To us, or we may adopt  
Him as a son." And they  
Perceived not (what they  
Were doing) !<sup>3336</sup>

10. But there came to be  
A void in the heart  
Of the mother of Moses :  
She was almost on the point  
Of discovering him, had We  
Not strengthened her heart  
(With faith), so that she  
Might remain a (firm) believer.<sup>3337</sup>

11. And she said to the sister  
Of (Moses), " Follow him ".  
So she (the sister) watched him  
In the character of a stranger.  
And they knew not.

12. And We ordained that he  
Refused suck at first, until  
(His sister came up  
And) said : " Shall I  
Point out to you the people  
Of a house that will nourish  
And bring him up for you  
And be sincerely attached  
To him ? "...<sup>3338</sup>

13. Thus did We restore him  
To his mother, that her eye  
Might be comforted, that she  
Might not grieve, and that  
She might know that the promise  
Of God is true : but  
Most of them do not understand.<sup>3339</sup>

عَلَى أَنْ يَنْفَعَنَا أَوْ نَكُونُوا وَلَدًا  
وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ

اِذَا أَصْبَحَ فَأُودِىَ مُوسَىٰ طِفْلًا  
إِنْ كَادَتْ لَتُبْدِيهِ بَابُ  
لَوْ لَأَنَّ رَبَّنَا عَلَىٰ قَلْبِهَا  
يَتَكَلَّمُونَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

وَقَالَتْ لِأُخْتِهِ قُصِّيهِ  
فَصَدَّتْ بِهٖ عَنْ جَنْبِ  
وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ

وَحَرَّمْنَا عَلَيْهِ الْمَرَاضِعَ مِنْ قَبْلِ  
فَقَالَتْ هَلْ أَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ أَهْلِ بَيْتٍ  
يَكْفُلُونَهُ لَكُمْ  
وَهُمْ لَهُ لَٰبِقُونَ

فَرَدَدْنَاهُ إِلَىٰ أُمِّهِ كَيْ تَقَرَّ عَيْنُهَا وَ  
لَا تَحْزَنَ ۚ وَتَعْلَمَ أَنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ  
وَلَا يَكْرِهُونَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

3336. In all life Providence so orders things that Evil is defeated by its own weapons. Not only is it defeated, but it actually, though unwittingly, advances the cause of Good! In non-religious language this is called the work of the Ironic Fates. If Thomas Hardy had not made Napoleon the Puppet of Fate in his "Dynasts", he could well have taken Pharaoh as an illustration of the Irony of Fate, or, as we should prefer to call it, the working of the Universal Plan.

3337. The mother's heart felt the gaping void at parting from her son; but her Faith in God's Providence kept her from betraying herself.

3338. *For you* : i.e. on your behalf. Thus Moses got the benefit of his mother's milk (symbolical of all the traditions and spiritual heritage of his ancestry and his people) as well as the prestige and the opportunities of being brought up in the royal family, with the best of teachers to teach him Egyptian wisdom. In addition, there was the comfort to his mother.

3339. God's promise is always true, but short-sighted people, if they are a little thwarted in their plan, do not understand that God's wisdom, power, and goodness are far more comprehensive than any little plans which they may form.

## SECTION 2.

14. ~~When~~ When he reached full age,  
And was firmly established<sup>3340</sup>  
(In life), We bestowed on him  
Wisdom and knowledge: for thus  
Do We reward those  
Who do good.

۱۴- وَلَمَّا بَلَغَ أَشُدَّهُ  
وَاسْتَوَىٰ آتَيْنَاهُ حُكْمًا وَعِلْمًا  
وَكَذَٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ ○

15. And he entered the City<sup>3341</sup>  
At a time when its people  
Were not watching: and he  
Found there two men fighting,—  
One of his own religion,  
And the other, of his foes.  
Now the man of his own  
Religion appealed to him  
Against his foe, and Moses  
Struck him with his fist<sup>3342</sup>  
And made an end of him.  
He said: "This is a work  
Of Evil (Satan): for he is  
An enemy that manifestly  
Misleads!"

۱۵- وَدَخَلَ الْمَدِينَةَ عَلَىٰ حِينٍ غَفْلَةٍ  
مِّنْ أَهْلِهَا فَوَجَدَ فِيهَا رَجُلَيْنِ يَقْتَتِلَانِ  
هَٰذَا مِنْ شِيعَتِهِ وَهَٰذَا مِنْ عَدُوِّهِ  
فَاسْتَعَاثَ الَّذِي مِنَ شِيعَتِهِ عَلَى الَّذِي  
مِنْ عَدُوِّهِ  
فَوَكَزَهُ مُوسَىٰ فَقَضَىٰ عَلَيْهِ  
قَالَ هَٰذَا مِنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ  
إِنَّهُ عَدُوٌّ مُّضِلٌّ مُّبِينٌ ○

16. He prayed: "O my Lord!  
I have indeed wronged my soul!  
Do Thou then forgive me!"  
So (God) forgave him: for He  
Is the Oft-Forgiving, Most  
Merciful.

۱۶- قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِي  
فَاغْفِرْ لِي فَغُفِرَ لَهُ  
إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ ○

3340. Full age may be taken to be mature youth, say between 18 and 30 years of age. By that time a person is fully established in life: his physical build is completed, and his mental and moral habits are formed. In this case, as Moses was good at heart, true and loyal to his people, and obedient and just to those among whom he lived, he was granted wisdom and knowledge from on high, to be used for the times of conflict which were coming for him. His internal development being complete, he now goes out into the outer world, where he is again tried and proved, until he gets his divine commission.

3341. That may have been either the time of the noontide siesta, when all business is suspended even now in Egypt, or the time of night, when people are usually asleep. The latter is more probable, in view of verse 18 below. But there is also another suggestion. A guest in a Palace is not free to wander about at will in the plebeian quarters of the City at all sorts of hours, and this applies even more to an inmate of the Palace brought up as a son. Moses was therefore visiting the City privately and eluding the guards. His object may have been to see for himself how things were going on; perhaps he had heard that his people were being oppressed, as we may suppose that he had retained contact with his mother.

3342. His object was apparently to strike him so as to release the Israelite, not to kill the Egyptian. In fact he killed the Egyptian. This was unfortunate in more ways than one. His visit to the City was clandestine; he had taken the side of the weaker and despised party; and he had taken the life of an Egyptian. He was full of regrets and repentance, and he prayed to God, and obtained God's forgiveness.



17. He said: "O my Lord!  
For that Thou hast bestowed  
Thy Grace on me, never  
Shall I be a help  
To those who sin!" <sup>3343</sup>
18. So he spent the morning  
In the City, looking about,  
In a state of fear, when  
Behold, the man who had,  
The day before, sought his help  
Called aloud for his help  
(Again). Moses said to him:  
"Thou art truly a quarrelsome" <sup>3344</sup>  
Fellow!"
19. Then, when he decided to lay  
Hold of the man who was <sup>3345</sup>  
An enemy to both of them,  
That man said: "O Moses!  
Is it thy intention to slay me  
As thou slewest a man  
Yesterday? Thy intention is  
None other than to become  
A powerful violent man  
In the land, and not to be  
One who sets things right!" <sup>3346</sup>

١٧- قَالَ رَبِّ بِمَا أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ  
فَلَنْ أَكُونَ ظَهِيرًا لِلْمُجْرِمِينَ ○

١٨- فَاصْبَرَ فِي الْمُدِينَةِ خَائِفًا يَتَرَقَّبُ  
فَإِذَا الذِّمَى اسْتَغْتَصَرَهُ بِالْأَمْسِ  
يَسْتَصْرِجُهُ  
قَالَ لَهُ مُوسَى  
إِنَّكَ لَفُوقٌ فِيمِينَ ○

١٩- فَلَمَّا أَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يَنْبِطِشَ بِالذِّمَى  
هُوَ عَدُوٌّ لَهُمَا  
قَالَ يَمُوسَى أَتُرِيدُ أَنْ تَقْتُلَنِي  
كَمَا قَتَلْتَ نَفْسًا بِالْأَمْسِ ٥ إِنْ تُرِيدُ  
إِلَّا أَنْ تَكُونَ جَبَّارًا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا  
تُرِيدُ أَنْ تَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُصْلِحِينَ ○

3343. He takes a conscious and solemn vow to dedicate himself to God, and to do nothing that may in any way assist those who were doing wrong. This was his general idea, but no plan had yet shaped itself in his mind, until a second catastrophe brought matters to a head, and he was plunged in adventure.

3344. The man was an Israelite. But Moses was himself in a distracted mood, for the reasons given in n. 3342 above, and he was exasperated at this public appeal to him again.

3345. When Moses considered further that the Egyptian was unjust and that the Egyptian was an enemy to Israel generally (including both Moses and the man assaulted), he was going to intervene again, when he received a double warning, one from the Egyptian who was fighting, and the other from some man (Israelite or Egyptian) who was friendly to him, as explained below. We may suppose that after the first day's fight, there had been a great deal of talk in the bazars, both among Israelites and Egyptians. Probably the Israelites were elated at finding a champion—perhaps more elated than they should have been, and in a provocative mood, which deserved Moses's rebuke. Probably the Egyptians had discussed who this new champion was, and had already apprised the Palace, to which Moses had not dared to return.

3346. The Egyptian saw the tactical advantage of his position. In effect he said: 'We have found out all about you. You live in the Palace, and yet you come clandestinely and kill our Egyptians. Are you going to do the same with me? You are nothing but a bully! And you talk of setting things right! That is what you should do if you were true to your salt!'

20. And there, came a man,  
Running, from the furthest end<sup>3347</sup>  
Of the City. He said:  
"O Moses! the Chiefs  
Are taking counsel together  
About thee, to slay thee:  
So get thee away, for I  
Do give thee sincere advice."

٢٠- وَجَاءَ رَجُلٌ مِنْ أَقْصَا الْمَدِينَةِ يَسْعَى  
قَالَ يَمُوسَى إِنَّ الْمَلَائِكَةَ يَأْتِمُرُونَ بِكَ  
لِيُكَلِّمُوكَ فَاهْرُبْ  
إِنِّي لَكَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ

21. He therefore got away therefrom,<sup>3348</sup>  
Looking about, in a state  
Of fear. He prayed:  
"O my Lord! save me  
From people given to  
wrong-doing."

٢١- فَهَرَجَ مِنْهَا خَائِفًا يَتَرَقَّبُ  
قَالَ رَبِّهِ يَجْعَلْنِي  
مِنَ الْقَوَّامِينَ

### SECTION 3.

22. Then, when he turned his face  
Towards (the land of) Madyan,<sup>3349</sup>  
He said: "I do hope  
That my Lord will show me  
The smooth and straight Path."

٢٢- وَلَمَّا تَوَجَّهَ تِلْقَاءَ مَدْيَنَ  
قَالَ عَلَى رَبِّي أَن يَهْدِيَنِي سَوَاءَ  
السَّبِيلِ

23. And when he arrived at  
The watering (place) in Madyan,<sup>3350</sup>  
He found there a group  
Of men watering (their flocks),  
And besides them he found  
Two women who were keeping

٢٣- وَلَمَّا وَرَدَ مَاءَ مَدْيَنَ  
وَجَدَ عَلَيْهِ أُمَّةٌ مِنَ النَّاسِ يَسْقُونَ  
وَوَجَدَ مِنْ دُونِهِمُ امْرَأَتَيْنِ تَذُودَانِ

3347. Apparently rumours had reached the Palace, a Council had been held, and the death of Moses had been decreed!

3348. Moses saw that his position was now untenable, both in the Palace and in the City, and indeed anywhere in Pharaoh's territory. So he suffered voluntary exile. But he did not know where to go to. His mind was in a state of agitation. But he turned to God and prayed. He got consolation, and felt that after all it was no hardship to leave Egypt, where there was so much injustice and oppression.

3349. East of Lower Egypt, for about 300 miles, runs the Sinai Peninsula, bounded on the south by the Gulf of Suez, and on the north by what was the Isthmus of Suez, now cut by the Suez Canal. Over the Isthmus ran the highroad to Palestine and Syria, but a fugitive could not well take that road, as the Egyptians were after him. If he could, after crossing the Isthmus, plunge into the Sinai desert, east or south-east, he would be in the Midianite territory, where the people would be Arabs and not Egyptians. He turned thither, and again prayed to God for guidance.

3350. The first thing that a wanderer in a desert would make for would be an oasis where he could get water from a spring or well, the shade of trees against the scorching sun, and some human company. The Midianite watering place was probably a deep well, as surface springs are rare in sandy deserts, where the water level is low, unless there was a hill from which issued a spring.

Back (their flocks). He said:  
 "What is the matter with you?"  
 They said: "We cannot water  
 (Our flocks) until the shepherds  
 Take back (their flocks):  
 And our father is...<sup>3351</sup>  
 A very old man."

24. So he watered (their flocks)  
 For them; then he turned back  
 To the shade, and said:  
 "O my Lord!  
 Truly am I  
 In (desperate) need  
 Of any good  
 That Thou dost send me!"...<sup>3352</sup>

25. Afterwards one of the (damsels)  
 Came (back) to him, walking  
 Bashfully. She said: "My father  
 Invites thee that he may  
 Reward thee for having watered<sup>3353</sup>  
 (Our flocks) for us." So when  
 He came to him and narrated  
 The story, he said:

قَالَ مَا حَظُّكُمَا  
 قَالَتَا لَا نَسْقِي حَتَّى يُصَدِّرَ الرَّحَاءُ  
 وَأَبُونَا شَيْخٌ كَبِيرٌ ٥

فَسَقَى لَهُمَا  
 ثُمَّ تَوَلَّى إِلَى الظِّلِّ فَقَالَ  
 رَبِّ إِنِّي لِمَا أَنْزَلْتَ إِلَيَّ  
 مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَقِيرٌ ٥

فَجَاءَتْهُ إِحْدَاهُمَا تَمْشِي عَلَى اسْتِحْيَاءٍ  
 قَالَتْ إِنَّ أَبِي يَدْعُوكَ لِيَجْزِيَكَ أَجْرَ  
 مَا سَقَيْتَ لَنَا  
 فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُ وَقَصَّ عَلَيْهِ الْقَصَصَ قَالَ

3351. Here is a pretty little idyll, told in the fewest and most beautiful words possible. Moses arrives at an oasis in the desert, weary and travel-worn, with his mind full of anxiety and uncertainty owing to his recent experiences in Egypt. He was thirsty and would naturally seek water. At the well or spring he found shepherds (or perhaps goat-herds) watering their flocks. As a stranger it was not for him to thrust himself among them. He waited under the shade of a tree until they should finish. He noticed two damsels, also waiting, with their flocks, which they had come to water. His chivalry was roused. He went at once among the goat-herds, made a place for the flocks of the damsels, gave them water, and then resumed his place in the shade. They were modest maidens, and had given him in three Arabic words the key of the whole situation. 'Abū-nā shaiḥhun kabīrun: our father is a very old man, and therefore cannot come to water the flocks; we therefore do the work; we could not very well thrust ourselves among these men.'

3352. The maidens are gone, with smiles on their lips and gratitude in their hearts. What were the reflections of Moses as he returned to the shade of the tree? He returned thanks to God for the bright little vision which he had just seen. Had he done a good deed? Precious was the opportunity he had had. He had slaked his thirst. But he was a homeless wanderer and had a longing in his soul, which he dared not put into words. Those shepherds were no company for him. He was truly like a beggar in desperate need. For any little good that came his way, he was grateful. But what was this?—this vision of a comfortable household, presided over by an old man rich in flocks and herds, and richer still in two daughters, as modest as they were beautiful? Perhaps he would never see them again! But Providence was preparing another surprise for him.

3353. Scarcely had he rested, when one of the damsels came back, walking with bashful grace! Modestly she gave her message. 'My father is grateful for what you did for us. He invites you, that he may thank you personally, and at least give some return for your kindness.'

"Fear thou not: (well) hast thou  
Escaped from unjust people."<sup>3354</sup>

26. Said one of the (damsels):  
"O my (dear) father! engage<sup>3355</sup>  
Him on wages; truly the best  
Of men for thee to employ is  
The (man) who is strong and  
trusty"...<sup>3356</sup>

27. He said: "I intend to wed  
One of these my daughters  
To thee, on condition that  
Thou servè me for eight years;<sup>3357</sup>  
But if thou complete ten years,  
It will be (grace) from thee.  
But I intend not to place  
Thee under a difficulty:

لَا تَخَفْ فَتَجُوتَ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ○

٢٦- قَالَتْ اِحْدَاهُمَا يَا أَبَتِ اسْتَأْجِرْهُ  
إِنَّ عَمَلَهُ مِنْ اسْتَأْجَرْتَ  
الْقَوِيُّ الْأَمِينُ ○

٢٧- قَالَ إِنِّي أُرِيدُ أَنْ نَبْتَكِّحَ بِكَ الْغَنَى  
فَتَكُنْ عَلَى أَنْ تَأْجُرَنِي ثَمَنِي حَبِيرٌ  
وَإِنْ أَتَمَمْتِ عَشْرًا فَمِنْ عِنْدِي  
وَمَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ أَمْسُقَ عَلَيْكَ

3354. Nothing could have been more welcome than such a message, and through such a messenger. Moses went of course, and saw the old man. He found such a well-ordered patriarchal household. The old man was happy in his daughters and they in him. There was mutual confidence. They had evidently described the stranger to him in terms which made his welcome a foregone conclusion. On the other hand Moses had allowed his imagination to paint the father in something of the glorious colours in which his daughters had appeared to him like an angelic vision. The two men got to be friends at once. Moses told the old man his story,—who he was, how he was brought up, and what misfortunes had made him quit Egypt. Perhaps the whole household, including the daughters, listened breathlessly to his tale. Perhaps their wonder and admiration were mingled with a certain amount of pity—perhaps with some more tender feeling in the case of the girl who had been to fetch him. Perhaps the enchantment which Desdemona felt in Othello's story was working on her. In any case the stranger had won his place in their hearts. The old man, the head of the household, assured him of hospitality and safety under his roof. As one with a long experience of life he congratulated him on his escape. 'Who would live among unjust people? It is as well you are free of them!'

3355. A little time passes. A guest after all cannot stay for ever. They all feel that it would be good to have him with them permanently. The girl who had given her heart to him had spoken their unspoken thoughts. Why not employ him to tend the flocks? The father was old, and a young man was wanted to look after the flocks. And—there may be other possibilities.

3356. *Strong and trusty*: Moses had proved himself to be both, and these were the very qualities which a woman most admires in the man she loves.

3357. A little time passed, and at length the father broached the subject of marriage. It was not for the fugitive to suggest a permanent tie, especially when, in the wealth of this world, the girl's family was superior, and they had an established position, while he was a mere wanderer. The father asked if he would marry one of the daughters and stay with them for at least eight years, or if he liked, ten years, but the longer term was at his option. If he brought no dowry, his service for that period was more than sufficient in lieu of dowry. The particular girl intended was no doubt tacitly settled long before, by the mutual attraction of the young hearts themselves. Moses was glad of the proposal, and accepted it. They ratified it in the most solemn manner, by appealing to God. The old man, knowing the worth of his son-in-law, solemnly assured him that in any event he would not take advantage of his position to be a hard task-master or to insist on anything inconsistent with Moses's interests, should a new future open out to him. And a new and glorious future was awaiting him after his apprenticeship.

Thou wilt find me,  
Indeed, if God wills,  
One of the righteous."

28. He said: "Be that (the agreement)  
Between me and thee:  
Whichever of the two terms  
I fulfil, let there be  
No ill-will to me.  
Be God a witness  
To what we say." <sup>3358</sup>

#### SECTION 4.

29. Now when Moses had fulfilled  
The term, and was travelling <sup>3359</sup>  
With his family, he perceived  
A fire in the direction  
Of Mount Tur. He said  
To his family: "Tarry ye;  
I perceive a fire; I hope  
To bring you from there  
Some information, or a burning  
Firebrand, that ye may  
Warm yourselves." <sup>3360</sup>

30. But when he came  
To the (Fire), a voice

سَمِعْتُمْ أَن شَاءَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الطَّالِبِينَ ○

٢٨- قَالَ ذَلِكَ يَسْنَى وَبَيْنَكَ  
إِنَّمَا الْأَجَلَيْنِ قَضَيْتُ لَكَ أَعْلَى وَإِنْ عَلَى  
وَاللَّهُ عَلَى مَا نَقُولُ وَكِيلٌ ○

٢٩- فَلَمَّا قَضَى مُوسَى الْأَجَلَ وَسَارَ بِأَهْلِهِ  
أَنَسَ مِنْ جَانِبِ الطُّورِ نَارًا  
قَالَ لِأَهْلِهِ امْكُثُوا  
إِنِّي أَنَسْتُ نَارًا تَعْلَى أْتِيكُمْ مِنْهَا بَخِيرٌ  
أَوْ جَذْوَةٌ مِنَ النَّارِ تَلْهَكُكُمْ تَضَلُّونَ ○

٣٠- فَلَمَّا أَتَاهَا نُودِيَ

3358. In patriarchal society it was not uncommon to have a marriage bargain of this kind conditional on a certain term of service. In this case the episode conveys two lessons. (1) A man destined to be an apostle of God is yet a man, and must pass through the ups and downs of life like any other man: only he will do it with more grace and distinction than other men. (2) The beautiful relations in love and marriage may themselves be a preparation for the highest spiritual destiny that may await a Messenger of God. A woman need not necessarily be a snare and a temptation: she may be the understanding help-mate that the Lady Khadija was to the holy Apostle.

3359. The episode in the desert, full of human interest, now closes, and we come to the threshold of the sacred Call to the divine ministry of Moses. Here we may compare this passage with that in xxvii. 7-14 and previous passages. Note that a speech in such cases is not a literal report of spoken words, but a general rendering in human words of Commands, Events, and Thoughts, such as may be relevant in connection with any particular episode and its context. In this passage we are told, after reference to Moses's preparation for his high destiny, of the particular sin of Arrogance and Sacrilege of which Pharaoh was guilty (xxviii. 38-9), how it was punished, and with what instruments in the hands of Moses and Pharaoh. The notes on the earlier passage should be read, as explanations already given need not now be repeated.

3360. Note how the transition is effected from the happy earthly life of Moses (with its previous earthly storm and stress) to the new spiritual storm and stress of his prophetic mission.

Was heard from the right bank  
Of the valley, from a tree<sup>3361</sup>  
In hallowed ground :  
" O Moses ! Verily  
I am God, the Lord  
Of the Worlds...

مِنْ شَارِطِ الْوَادِ الْأَيْمَنِ  
فِي الْبُقْعَةِ الْمُبَارَكَةِ مِنَ الشَّجَرَةِ  
أَنْ يَخُوتَى إِلَى أَنَا اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ

31. " Now do thou throw thy rod ! "  
But when he saw it  
Moving (of its own accord)  
As if it had been a snake,  
He turned back in retreat,  
And retraced not his steps :  
" O Moses ! " (it was said),  
" Draw near, and fear not :  
For thou art of those  
Who are secure."<sup>3362</sup>

إِسْرَءِيلَ إِذْ رَأَى أَنَّهُ  
يَسْبُحُ كَالْحَيَّةِ فَانْمَازَ  
وَلَمْ يَخُذْ أَسْوَاقَهُ  
فَلَمَّا تَوَلَّوْا كَانُوا  
تِلْكَ مِنَ الْآمِنِينَ

32. " Move thy hand into  
Thy bosom, and it will  
Come forth white without stain  
(Or harm), and draw thy hand  
Close to thy side  
(To guard) against fear."<sup>3363</sup>  
Those are the two credentials  
From thy Lord to Pharaoh  
And his Chiefs : for truly  
They are a people  
Rebellious and wicked."

۳۲- اْمْلِكْ يَدَكَ فِي جَيْبِكَ  
تَخْرُجُ بَيْضًا مِنْ غَيْرِ سُوءٍ  
وَاطْمِسْ إِلَيْكَ جَنَاحَكَ مِنَ الرَّهْبِ  
فَذَلِكَ بُرْهَانُكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ إِلَى فِرْعَوْنَ وَ  
مَلَائِكَتِهِ  
إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمًا فَاسِقِينَ

33. He said : " O my Lord !  
I have slain a man

۳۳- قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي قَتَلْتُ

3361. We are to suppose the appearance of a bush burning but not consumed (Exod. iii. 2), a device adopted by the Scottish Church in its armorial bearings. Scotland apparently took that emblem and motto (*Nec tamen consumebatur*, 'nevertheless it was not consumed') from the Synod of the Reformed Church of France, which had adopted it in 1583. (I am indebted for this information to the Rev. D. Y. Robertson, Chaplain of the Church of Scotland in Simla). The real explanation of the Burning Bush will be found in xxvii. 8, n. 3245 : it was not a fire, but a reflection of the Glory of God.

3362. The verbal meaning is : 'you have nothing to fear from what appears to be a snake : it is a snake, not for you, but for Pharaoh.' But there is a deeper meaning besides. Moses had now been called to a higher and spiritual mission. He had to meet the hatred of the Egyptians and circumvent their trickery and magic. He had now the security of Faith : in all dangers and difficulties God would guide and protect him, for he was actually in God's service, one of the Elect.

3363. Literally, "draw thy wing close to thy side, (away) from fear". When a bird is frightened, it ruffles its wings and prepares to fly away, but when it is calm and composed, it sits with its wings drawn close to its sides, showing a mind secure from danger. Cf. also n. 2550 to xx. 22.

Among them, and I fear<sup>3364</sup>  
Lest they slay me.

34. "And my brother Aaron—  
He is more eloquent in speech  
Than I : so send him  
With me as a helper,  
To confirm (and strengthen) me :  
For I fear that they may  
Accuse me of falsehood."

35. He said : "We will certainly  
Strengthen thy arm through  
Thy brother, and invest you both  
With authority, so they  
Shall not be able to<sup>3365</sup>  
Touch you : with Our Signs  
Shall ye triumph,—you two  
As well as those  
Who follow you."<sup>3366</sup>

36. When Moses came to them  
With Our Clear Signs, they said :  
"This is nothing but sorcery"<sup>3367</sup>  
Faked up : never did we  
Hear the like among our fathers  
Of old ! "<sup>3368</sup>

وَهُمْ نَفْسًا فَاخَاكَ أَنْ يُقَتِّلُونَ

۳۳- وَأَرْجَى هَارُونَ فَوَاقَصْنَاهُ مَعِيَ لِسَانًا  
فَأَرْسَلْنَاهُ مَعِيَ رِدْءًا يُصَدِّقُنِي  
لِيَخْشَاكَ أَنْ يَكْفُرَ بِيَوْمِي

۳۵- قَالَ سَنَشُدُّ عَضُدَكَ بِأَخِيكَ  
وَجَعَلْنَا لَكُمَا سُلْطَانًا  
فَلَا يَصِلُونَ إِلَيْكُمَا بِآيَاتِنَا  
أَنْتُمَا وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَكُمَا الْغَالِبُونَ

۳۶- فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ مُوسَى بِآيَاتِنَا بَيِّنَاتٍ قَالُوا  
مَا هَذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُفْتَرًى  
وَمَا نَسْمَعُ بِهَذَا فِي آبَائِنَا الْأُولَى

3364. It is not that Moses is not reassured from all fear on account of the apparent snake which his rod had become, or from the sacred and unfamiliar surroundings in which he found himself. On this point his heart has been completely assured. But he is still new to his mission, and the future is obscure to his mind. Pharaoh was after him, to take his life, and apparently with good cause, because one of Pharaoh's men had been slain at his hands. And now he is commanded to go to Pharaoh and rebuke him and his Chiefs. The inner doubts and difficulties of his human mind he frankly lays before his Lord, and asks for a little human and visible support, which is granted him at once, viz. : the help of his brother Aaron.

3365. *To touch you* : to approach you anywhere near, in the wonders and Signs that you will show them under the divine authority with which you are invested.

3366. The potency of God's Light is such that its divine rays reach the humblest of those who seek after Him. The Prophets can certainly work wonders, but their sincere followers in Faith can do so also in their own spheres. Wonders may appeal to people, but they are not the highest signs of God's workings, and they are around us every day in our lives.

3367. This is what Moses was thinking of when he had said : "They may accuse me of falsehood". To accuse the purest Truth of lying is a favourite trick of those whose chief stock-in-trade is deception and sorcery and catching the attention of the vulgar by arts adapted to their ignorant minds !

3368. 'As to this higher talk of the worship of the One true God, why, our ancestors have worshipped power and patronage, as concentrated in Pharaoh, from the most ancient times !'

37. Moses said : " My Lord  
Knows best who it is  
That comes with guidance  
From Him and whose End  
Will be best in the Hereafter :  
Certain it is that  
The wrong-doers will not  
prosper." <sup>3369</sup>

٣٧- وَقَالَ مُوسَى رَبِّيْ أَعْلَمُ  
بِمَنْ جَاءَ بِالْهُدَى مِنْ عِنْدِ  
وَمَنْ تَكُونُ لَهُ عَاقِبَةُ الدَّارِ  
إِنَّهُ لَا يَهْدِيهِ الظَّالِمُونَ ○

38. Pharaoh said : " O Chiefs !  
No god do I know for you" <sup>3370</sup>  
But myself : therefore,  
O Hāmān ! light me a kiln  
(To bake bricks) out of clay,  
And build me a lofty <sup>3371</sup>  
Palace, that I may mount up  
To the god of Moses :  
But as far as I am concerned,  
I think (Moses) is a liar ! "

٣٨- وَقَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُ مَا عَلِمْتُ  
لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهِ غَيْرِيْ  
فَأَوْقِدْ لِيْ يَٰ هَامَانَ عَلَى الطِّينِ  
فَأَجْعَلْ لِّيْ صَرْصَأًا عَلٰى أَكْطَفِ الْإِلَهِ مُوسَى  
وَلِيْ لَا ظُلْمَ لَهُ مِنَ الْكَذِبِينَ ○

39. And he was arrogant and insolent  
In the land, beyond reason,—  
He and his hosts : they thought  
That they would not have  
To return to Us ! " <sup>3372</sup>

٣٩- وَاسْتَكْبَرَ هُوَ وَجُنُودُهُ فِي الْأَرْضِ  
بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ  
وَقَالُوا أَنَّهُمْ إِلَٰهِنَا لَا يُرْجَعُونَ ○

40. So We seized him  
And his hosts, and We  
Flung them into the sea : <sup>3373</sup>  
Now behold what was the End  
Of those who did wrong !

٤٠- فَآخَذْنَاهُ وَجُنُودَهُ فَنَبَذْنَاهُمْ فِي  
الْيَمِّ  
فَانْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الظَّالِمِينَ ○

3369, Cf. vi. 135. The only argument in such a case is an appeal to God, and to the ultimate Future. Both of these appeals require Faith. But even if you do not rely on anything so high, you can see that Falsehood or evils crystallised in ancestral customs are not going to do anyone any good.

3370, Pharaoh claimed, himself, to be God,—not only one god among many, but the only god : " I am your Lord Most High " : lxxix. 24. At any rate he did not see why his people should worship anyone but him.

3371. I understand his speech to his minister Hāmān to be sarcastic. But some Commentators have taken it very seriously and imagined that he actually thought of reaching the heavens by building lofty towers.

3372. They did not believe in the Hereafter. They did not understand that every deed must have its inevitable consequence, good or evil, unless the Grace of God intervenes to save us from ourselves !

3373. Pharaoh and his hosts were drowned in the sea in their pursuit of the Israelites : see vii, 130-136. They are the type of men who lead—only to Destruction. They invite, not to Peace and Happiness, but to the Fire of Wrath, mutual Envy, and Hatred.



41. And We made them (but)  
Leaders inviting to the Fire;  
And on the Day of Judgment  
No help shall they find.

٣١- وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ آيَةً يُدْعَوْنَ إِلَى النَّارِ  
وَلَيْسَ لَهُمْ فِيهَا نَصْرٌ ۝

42. In this world We made  
A Curse to follow them:<sup>3374</sup>  
And on the Day of Judgment  
They will be among  
The loathed (and despised).

٣٢- وَاتَّبَعْنَاهُمْ فِي هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا لَعْنَةً  
وَلَيَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ هُمْ مِنَ الْمَقْبُوحِينَ ۝

C. 174.—As with Moses, so with the Apostle Muhammad:  
(xxviii. 43-60.) Revelation was given to him, by which

He knew and understood, and led men and was kind.  
He was a Mercy to men, sent by God, to warn  
Those in sin, and, by precept and example,  
To bring the Light to their very doors.  
Those who had spiritual eyes rejoiced,  
And walked in God's ancient Way, now reopened,  
Valuing the things of the Spirit as God's  
Own gifts, to be their possession for ever!

#### SECTION 5.

43. ~~We~~ We did reveal to Moses  
The Book after We had  
Destroyed the earlier generations,  
(To give) Insight to men,  
And Guidance and Mercy,  
That they might receive  
admonition.<sup>3375</sup>

٣٣- وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ مِنْ بَعْدِ  
مَا أَهْلَكْنَا الْقُرُونَ  
الْأُولَى بِصَافِرٍ لِلنَّاسِ وَهَدًى وَرَحْمَةً  
لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ ۝

3374. Power and patronage may be lauded by sycophants and selfish place-hunters; but when they are misused, and when their exposure causes their fall, they suffer ignominy even in this life. If they manage to escape exposure while alive, it often happens that they are found out after their death, and the curses of many generations follow those whose oppressions and wrong-doing spoiled the fair face of God's earth. But even this is nothing to the true Punishment that will come in the Hereafter. There, true values will be restored, and some of the highest and mightiest will be in the lowest depths of degradation.

3375. After the destruction of the Pharaonic Tyranny and other similar Tyrannies before them, God began a new age of Revelation, the age of Moses and his Book. Humanity began as it were with a clean slate again. It was a full Revelation (or *Shar'at*) which may be looked at from three points of view: (1) as Light or Insight for men, so that they should not grope in darkness; (2) as a Guide to show them the Way, so that they should not be misled into wrong Paths; and (3) as a Mercy from God, so that by following the Way they may receive God's Forgiveness and Grace. In vi. 91, we have a reference to Light and Guidance in connection with the Revelation of Moses, and in vi. 154 we have a reference to Guidance and Mercy in the same connection. Here all three are combined, with the substitution of *Baqār* for *Nūr*. *Baqār* is the plural of *Baqarāt*, and may also be translated Proofs, as I have done in vi. 104. Cf. also vii, 203, n. 1175, where the word is translated "Lights".

44. Thou wast not on the Western <sup>3376</sup>  
Side when We decreed  
The Commission to Moses,  
Nor wast thou a witness  
(Of those events).

۴۴- وَمَا كُنْتَ بِجَانِبِ الْعَرَبِينَ إِذْ قَضَيْنَا  
إِلَى مُوسَى الْأَمْرَ وَمَا كُنْتَ مِنَ  
الشَّاهِدِينَ ۝

45. But We raised up (new)  
Generations, and long were the <sup>3377</sup>  
ages  
That passed over them;  
But thou wast not a dweller  
Among the people of Madyan,  
Rehearsing Our Signs to them;  
But it is We Who send  
Apostles (with inspiration). <sup>3378</sup>

۴۵- وَلَكِنَّا أَنْشَأْنَا قُرُونًا  
تَتَّبِعُونَ أُولَىٰ عَلَيْهِمُ الْعَذَابُ ۚ  
وَمَا كُنْتَ شَاوِيًا فِي أَهْلِ مَدْيَنَ  
تَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمُ آيَاتِنَا  
وَلَكِنَّا كُنَّا مُرْسِلِينَ ۝

46. Nor wast thou at the side  
Of (the Mountain of) Tūr  
When We called (to Moses).  
Yet (art thou sent)  
As a Mercy from thy Lord,  
To give warning to a people <sup>3379</sup>  
To whom no warner had come  
Before thee: in order that  
They may receive admonition,

۴۶- وَمَا كُنْتَ بِجَانِبِ الطُّورِ  
إِذْ نَادَيْنَا وَلَكِنْ رَحْمَةً مِنْ رَبِّكَ  
لِنُنْذِرَ قَوْمًا مِمَّا آتَاهُمُ مِنْ تَذَكُّرٍ  
مِنْ قَبْلِكَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ ۝

47. If (We had) not (sent thee  
To the Quraish),—in case  
A calamity should seize them  
For (the deeds) that their hands  
Have sent forth, they might say:  
"Our Lord! why didst Thou not <sup>3380</sup>

۴۷- وَلَوْ لَا أَنْ تُصِيبَهُمْ مُصِيبَةٌ  
بِمَا قَدْ مَنَ آيَاتُهُمْ  
فَيَقُولُوا رَبَّنَا لَوْلَا

3376. The Sinai Peninsula is in the north-west corner of Arabia. But the reference here is, I think, to the western side of the valley of Tuwā. Mount Tūr, where Moses received his prophetic commission, is on the western side of the valley.

3377. That is, there were many generations that passed between Moses and the holy Prophet. Yet he knew by inspiration of the events of those times. Even if he had lived then, he could not have known the events that took place among the Midianites, except by inspiration, as he did not dwell among them.

3378. 'Though thou wast not among the Midianites, Our inspiration has told thee of the momentous events that took place among them when Moses was with them. This is itself a Sign that should make thy people understand.'

3379. This people was the Quraish. 'Though thou didst not see how Moses was invested with the prophetic office at Mount Tūr, thou hast had similar experience thyself, and We have sent thee to the Quraish to warn them of all their sins, and to repent and come into the Faith.'

3380. Now that a warner has come among them with all the authority that previous apostles possessed, and with all the knowledge which can only come by divine inspiration, they have no excuse left whatever. They cannot say, "No warner came to us." If any evil comes to them, as the inevitable result of their ill-deeds, they cannot blame God and say that they were not warned. Cf. xx. 134.

Send us an apostle ? We  
Should then have followed  
Thy Signs and been amongst  
Those who believe !”

48. But (now), when the Truth  
Has come to them from Ourselves,  
They say, “Why are not  
(Signs) sent to him, like  
Those which were sent to

Moses ?”<sup>3381</sup>

Do they not then reject  
(The Signs) which were formerly  
Sent to Moses ? They say :

“Two kinds of sorcery,  
Each assisting the other !”<sup>3382</sup>  
And they say : “For us,  
We reject all (such things) !”

49. Say : “Then bring ye  
A Book from God,  
Which is a better Guide  
Than either of them,  
That I may follow it !  
(Do), if ye are truthful !”

50. But if they hearken not<sup>3383</sup>  
To thee, know that they  
Only follow their own lusts :  
And who is more astray  
Than one who follows his own  
Lusts, devoid of guidance  
From God ? For God guides not  
People given to wrong-doing.

أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْنَا رَسُولًا  
فَنَقَّبَهُ إِلَيْكَ وَتَكُونُ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ○

٣٨- فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ عِنْدِنَا  
قَالُوا لَوْلَا آيَاتُ مُوسَى  
مِمَّا آتَيْنَا مُوسَى  
أَوْ لَمْ يَكْفُرُوا بِآيَاتِ مُوسَى مِنْ قَبْلُ  
قَالُوا سِحْرَانِ تَظَاهَرَا ۖ  
وَقَالُوا إِنَّا بِحُجَّتِكُمْ كَافِرُونَ ○

٣٩- قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِكِتَابٍ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ  
هُوَ أَهْدَى مِنْهُمَا  
إِذْ بَعَثْنَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ○

٥٠- وَإِنْ لَمْ يَنْتَهِبُوا لَكَ فَاَعْلَمُوا أَنَّكَ  
يَكْفُرُونَ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ وَمَنْ أَضَلُّ مِنْ  
الَّذِي هُوَ يُبْعِدُ هُدًى مِنَ اللَّهِ  
إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ○

3381. When a Revelation is sent to them, in the Qur-ān, adapted to all their needs and the needs of the time they live in, they hark back to antiquity. The holy Prophet was in many respects like Moses, but the times in which he lived were different from the times of Moses, and his age did not suffer from the deceptions of sorcery, like that of Moses. The remedies which his age and future ages required (for his Message was universal) were different. His miracle of the Qur-ān was different and more permanent than the Rod and the Radiant-White Hand of Moses. But supposing that the Quraish had been humoured in their insincere demands, would they have believed ? Did they believe in Moses ? They were only put up by the Jews to make objections which they themselves did not believe in.

3382. Moses was called a sorcerer by the Egyptians, and the wonderful words of the Qur-ān were called sorcery by the Quraish. As the Qur-ān confirmed the Message of Moses, the Quraish objectors said that they were in collusion. The Quraish did not believe in God's Revelation at all.

3383. They were challenged to produce something better, to be a guide in life. But as they could not, it was evident that their objections were fractious. They were only following their own selfish lusts of power, monopoly, and exploitation of the poor and ignorant. How can such people receive guidance ?

## SECTION 6.

51. Now have We caused  
The Word to reach them  
Themselves, in order that  
They may receive admonition.<sup>3384</sup>

٥١- وَلَقَدْ وَصَّلْنَا لَهُمُ الْقَوْلَ  
لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ ۝

52. Those to whom We sent  
The Book before this,—they  
Do believe in this (Revelation);

٥٢- الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ  
فَهُمْ بِهِ يُؤْمِنُونَ ۝

53. And when it is recited  
To them, they say: "We  
Believe therein, for it is  
The Truth from our Lord:  
Indeed we have been Muslims  
(Bowling to God's Will)  
From before this."<sup>3385</sup>

٥٣- وَإِذَا يُتْلَى عَلَيْهِمْ قَالُوا  
أَمَّا بِنَايَةِ إِلَهِهِ الْحَقِّ مِنْ رَبِّنَا  
إِنَّا كُنَّا مِنْ قَبْلِهِ مُسْلِمِينَ ۝

54. Twice will they be given<sup>3386</sup>  
Their reward, for that they  
Have persevered, that they avert  
Evil with Good, and that  
They spend (in charity) out of  
What We have given them.

٥٤- أُولَئِكَ يُؤْتَوْنَ أَجْرَهُم مَرَّتَيْنِ بِمَا  
صَبَرُوا وَيَذَرُونَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ الشَّيْئَةَ  
وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ ۝

55. And when they hear vain talk,  
They turn away therefrom  
And say: "To us our deeds,  
And to you yours;"<sup>3387</sup>

٥٥- وَإِذَا سَمِعُوا اللَّغْوَ أَعْرَضُوا عَنْهُ  
وَقَالُوا إِنَّا أَعْمَالُنَا وَلَكُمْ أَعْمَالُكُمْ

3384. Before this the Quraish might have said that the Word of God had come to the Hebrews in their tongue or in Greek, which was used by the Hebrews in the time of Jesus. Now that Word brought to their own doors, in their own Arabic tongue, by a man of their own race and family: Surely they have no excuse now for remaining strangers to the higher moral and spiritual law.

3385. There were Christians and Jews who recognised that Islam was a logical and natural development of God's revelations as given in earlier ages, and they not only welcomed and accepted Islam, but claimed, and rightly, that they had always been Muslims. In that sense Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus had all been Muslims. There were Muslims who had been Christians or Jews, both in Mecca and Medina. But when some Commentators proceed to illustrate this Meccan verse by referring, for example, to the Christian converts who came from Abyssinia with Ja'far the brother of 'Alī, they make a historical slip. The verse is perfectly general. It applies even now. True adherents of the law of Moses and Jesus must be Muslims, and the converse is also true.

3386. Their credit is twofold, in that before they knew Islam, they followed the earlier Law in truth and sincerity, and when they were offered Islam, they readily recognised and accepted it, suffered in patient perseverance for its sake, and brought forth the fruits of righteousness.

3387. The righteous do not encourage idle talk or foolish arguments about things sacred. If they find themselves in company in which such things are fashionable, they leave politely. Their only rejoinder is: "We are responsible for our deeds, and you for yours; we have no ill-will against you; we wish you well, and that is why we wish you to know of the knowledge we have received; after that knowledge you cannot expect us to go back to the Ignorance which we have left."

Peace be to you : we  
Seek not the ignorant."

56. It is true thou wilt not  
Be able to guide every one <sup>3388</sup>  
Whom thou lovest ; but God  
Guides those whom He will.  
And He knows best those  
Who receive guidance.

57. They say : " If we were  
To follow the guidance with thee,  
We should be snatched away <sup>3389</sup>  
From our land." Have We not  
Established for them a secure  
Sanctuary, to which are brought  
As tribute fruits of all kinds,—  
A provision from Ourselves ?  
But most of them understand not.

58. And how many populations  
We destroyed, which exulted  
In their life (of ease and plenty) !  
Now those habitations of theirs,  
After them, are deserted,—  
All but a (miserable) few !  
And We are their heirs ! <sup>3390</sup>

سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ لَا تَبْتَغِي الْجَاهِلِينَ ۝

هَـ٤ ۝ اِنَّكَ لَا تَهْدِي مَنْ اَحْبَبْتَ  
وَلَكِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ  
وَهُوَ اَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ ۝

هـ ۝ وَقَالُوا اِنْ تَتَّبِعِ الْهُدٰى مَعَكَ  
تُغْرَقْ مِنْ اَرْضِنَا  
اَوَلَمْ نُنْشِئْ لَهُمْ حَرَمًا اَمِنًا  
يُجْبٰى اِلَيْهِ ثَمَرَاتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَّزُرْنَا مِنْ  
لَّدُنَّا وَلَكِنْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ۝

هـ ۝ وَكَمْ اَهْلًا كُنَّا مِنْ قَبْلِهِ بَطَرًا  
مِّعِيشَتَهُمْ  
فَتِلْكَ مَسٰكِنُهُمْ لَمْ يَنْشِئْ لَهُمْ بَعْدَهُمْ  
اِلَّا قَلِيلًا ۝ وَكُنَّا نَحْنُ الْوَارِثِينَ ۝

3388. The immediate occasion for this was the death of Abū Ṭalib, an uncle whom the holy Apostle loved dearly and who had befriended and protected him. The Apostle was naturally anxious that he should die in the profession of the true Faith, but the pagan Quraish leaders persuaded him to remain true to the faith of his fathers. This was an occasion of disappointment and grief to the Apostle. We are told that in such circumstances we should not grieve. All whom we love do not necessarily share our views or beliefs. We must not judge. God will guide whom He pleases and as He pleases. He alone knows the true inwardness of things.

3389. Some Quraish said : " We see the truth of Islam, but if we abandon our people, we shall lose our hold on the land, and other people will dispossess us." The answer is twofold, one literal and the other of deeper import. (1) 'Your land? Why, the sanctuary of Mecca is sacred and secure because God has made it so. If you obey God's Word, you will be strengthened, not weakened.' (2) 'Mecca is the symbol of the Fortress of Spiritual Well-being. The Fruit of every Deed comes or should come as a tribute to Spiritual Well-being. What are you afraid of? It is God's Fortress. The more you seek God, the stronger you are in the Fortress.'

3390. A life of ease and plenty is nothing to boast of. Yet peoples or cities or civilisations grow insolently proud of such things. There were many such in the past, which are now mere names! Their very sites are deserted in most cases, or buried in the debris of ages. India is full of such sites nearly everywhere. The sites of Harappa and Mohenjo Daro are the most ancient hitherto unearthed in India, and they are themselves in layers covering centuries of time! And how many more there may be, of which we do not know even names! Fatehpur-Sikri was a magnificent ruin within a single generation. And there are thousands of Qasbas once flourishing and now reduced to small villages or altogether deserted. But God is merciful and just. He does not destroy or degrade a people until they have had full opportunities of turning in repentance to Him and they have deliberately rejected His Law and continued in the practice of iniquity.

59. Nor was thy Lord the one  
To destroy a population until  
He had sent to its Centre  
An apostle, rehearsing to them—  
Our Signs; nor are We  
Going to destroy a population  
Except when its members  
Practise iniquity.

٥٩- وَمَا كَانَ رَبُّكَ مُهْلِكَ الْقُرَى  
حَتَّى يَبْعَثَ فِي أُمَمٍ رَسُولًا يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ  
الْآيَاتِ وَمَا كُنَّا مُهْلِكِي الْقُرَى  
إِلَّا وَأَهْلُهَا ظَالِمُونَ ۝

60. The (material) things which  
Ye are given are but  
The conveniences of this life  
And the glitter thereof; <sup>3391</sup>  
But that which is with God  
Is better and more enduring:  
Will ye not then be wise?

٦٠- وَمَا أَوْتِيتُمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ  
مَتَاعَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَزِينَتُهَا  
وَمَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَى  
أَكَلًا تَعْقِلُونَ ۝

C. 175.—Material good is nothing compared  
(xxviii. 61-75.) To the spiritual. In the Hereafter  
No plea 'that others misled' will avail.  
Each soul must answer for itself,  
Whether it honoured God alone  
Or worshipped something else,  
And whether it received or rejected  
The Teachers sent by God. The Wisdom  
And Plan of God are beyond all praise:  
All mercy and truth proceed from Him,  
And there is no other—none—besides Him.

### SECTION 7.

61. Are (these two) alike?—  
One to whom We have made  
A goodly promise, and who  
Is going to reach its (fulfilment), <sup>3392</sup>  
And one to whom We have  
Given the good things of this  
Life, but who, on the Day  
Of Judgment, is to be among  
Those brought up (for punishment)?

٦١- أَقَمْنَا وَعَدْنَاهُ وَعَدًا حَسَنًا  
فَهُوَ لَا يَفِيهِ كَمَنْ مَتَّعْنَاهُ  
مَتَاعَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا  
فَهُوَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ مِنَ الْمُحْضَرِينَ ۝

3391. The good things of this life have their uses and serve their convenience. But they are fleeting and their value is infinitely lower than that of Truth and Justice and Spiritual Well-being, the gifts which come as it were from the very Presence of God. No wise soul will be absorbed in the one and neglect the other, or will hesitate for a moment if it comes to be a choice between them.

3392. The two classes of people are: (1) those who have faith in the goodly promise of God to the righteous, and who are doing everything in life to reach the fulfilment of that promise, i.e., those who believe and work righteousness, and (2) those who are ungrateful for such good things in this life as God has bestowed on them, by worshipping wealth or power or other symbols or idols of their fancy, i.e., those who reject Faith and lead evil lives, for which they will have to answer in the Hereafter. The two classes are poles asunder, and their future is described below.

62. That Day (God) will  
Call to them, and say:  
"Where are My 'partners'?—  
Whom ye imagined (to be such)?"

63. Those against whom the charge<sup>3393</sup>  
Will be proved, will say:  
"Our Lord! These are the ones  
Whom we led astray:  
We led them astray, as we  
Were astray ourselves: we free  
Ourselves (from them) in Thy  
presence:  
It was not us they worshipped."<sup>3394</sup>

64. It will be said (to them):  
"Call upon your 'partners'.  
(For help)": they will call  
Upon them, but they will not  
Listen to them; and they  
Will see the Penalty (before them);  
(How they will wish)  
'If only they had been  
Open to guidance!'

65. That Day (God) will<sup>3395</sup>  
Call to them, and say:  
"What was the answer  
Ye gave to the apostles?"

66. Then the (whole) story that day<sup>3396</sup>  
Will seem obscure to them  
(Like light to the blind)  
And they will not be able  
(Even) to question each other.

٦٢- وَيَوْمَ يُنَادِيهِمْ فَيَقُولُ  
اَيْنَ شُرَكَائِيَ الَّذِينَ كُنْتُمْ تَزْعُمُونَ ٥

٦٣- قَالَ الَّذِينَ حَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَوْلُ  
رَبَّنَا هَؤُلَاءِ الَّذِينَ أَغْوَيْنَا  
أَغْوَيْنَاهُمْ كَمَا أَغْوَيْنَا  
فَتَزَوَّجْنَاكَ الْهَيْكَلُ مَا كَانُوا  
إِذَا نَا يَعْبُدُونَ ٥

٦٤- وَقِيلَ ادْعُوا شُرَكَاءَكُمْ  
فَدَعَوْهُمْ فَلَمْ يَسْتَجِيبُوا لَهُمْ  
وَرَأَوْا الْعَذَابَ  
لَوْ أَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يَهْتَدُونَ ٥

٦٥- وَيَوْمَ يُنَادِيهِمْ فَيَقُولُ  
مَاذَا أَجَبْتُمُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ٥

٦٦- فَعُوتِبْتُمْ عَلَيْهِمُ الْآثَاءُ يَوْمَ تَوَدَّ  
أَنَّهُمْ لَا يَتَسَاءَلُونَ ٥

3393. This and the next verse are concerned with the examination of those who neglected truth and righteousness and went after the worship of false gods, viz., their own lusts. These were the "partners" they associated with God. In so far as they were embodied in false or wicked leaders, the leaders will disown responsibility for them. 'We ourselves went wrong, and they followed our example, because it suited them: they worshipped, not us, but their own lusts.'

3394. Cf. x. 28. False worship often names others, but really it is the worship of Self. The others whom they name will have nothing to do with them when the awful Penalty stands in the sight of both. Then each wrong-doer will have to look to his own case. The wicked will then realise the gravity of the situation and wish that they had accepted the true guidance of God's Messengers.

3395. Now we come to the examination of those who rejected or persecuted God's Messengers on the earth. It may be the same men as those mentioned in xxviii. 62-64, but this is a different count in the charge.

3396. In their utter confusion and despair their minds will be blank. The past will seem to them unreal, and the present unintelligible, and they will not even be able to consult each other, as every one's state will be the same.

67. But any that (in this life)  
Had repented, believed, and worked  
Righteousness, will have hopes  
To be among those who  
Achieve salvation.

٦٧- فَأَمَّا مَنْ تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا  
فَعَسَىٰ أَنْ يَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُفْلِحِينَ ○

68. Why Lord does create and  
choose  
As He pleases: <sup>3397</sup> no choice  
Have they (in the matter):  
Glory to God! and far  
Is He above the partners  
They ascribe (to Him)!

٦٨- وَرَبُّكَ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ وَيَخْتَارُ  
مَا كَانَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ  
سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَتَعَالَىٰ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ○

69. And thy Lord knows all  
That their hearts conceal  
And all that they reveal. <sup>3398</sup>

٦٩- وَرَبُّكَ يَعْلَمُ مَا تُكِنُّ صُدُورُهُمْ  
وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ ○

70. And He is God: there is  
No god but He. To Him  
Be praise, at the first  
And at the last:  
For Him is the Command,  
And to Him shall ye  
(All) be brought back.

٧٠- وَهُوَ اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ  
لَهُ الْحُكْمُ فِي الْأُولَىٰ وَالْآخِرَةِ  
وَلَهُ الْحُكْمُ وَالنَّبِيُّاتُ رُجَعُونَ ○

71. Say: See ye? If God  
Were to make the Night <sup>3399</sup>

٧١- قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمُ

3397. As He pleases: according to His own Will and Plan. God is not dependent on other people for advice or help. He has no partners. All creation is an act of His Will, and no one can direct Him how or why certain things should be, because He is supreme in wisdom and knowledge. He chooses His apostles also by His own unfettered choice. Inspiration or spiritual knowledge and dignity cannot be judged of by our relative or temporal standards. Worldly greatness or even wisdom do not necessarily go with spiritual insight.

3398. Men may form all sorts of vain wishes or conceal their designs. But God's Will is supreme, and nothing can withstand its fulfilment.

3399. In the physical world the Night and the Day are both blessings, the one for rest and the other for work, and the alternation itself is one of the mercies of God, and none but He can give us these blessings. If we were perpetually resting, or screened from the light, our faculties would be blunted and we should be worse than dead. If we were perpetually working, we should be tired, and we should also be dead in another way. This daily miracle keeps us alive and prepares us, in this our probationary life, for our final destiny in the Hereafter. So in the spiritual world. Some kinds of ignorance—such as ignorance of what is coming in the future—are necessary to conserve our powers and give rest to our minds and spirits, but if we were to remain ignorant perpetually, we should be spiritually dead. In the same way our spiritual strivings require periodical alternations of rest in the form of attention to our temporal concerns: hence the justification of a good and pure life on the plane of this earth also. Also, in the world's history, there are periods when a living apostle stimulates intense spiritual activity, and periods when it is comparatively quiescent (the so-called Dark Ages); but both are examples of the working of God's Plan of wisdom and mercy. But this applies only up to the Day of Judgment. After that we shall be on another plane altogether.



Perpetual over you to the Day  
Of Judgment, what god  
Is there other than God,  
Who can give you enlightenment?  
Will ye not then hearken?

72. Say: See ye? If God  
Were to make the Day  
Perpetual over you to the Day  
Of Judgment, what god  
Is there other than God,  
Who can give you a Night  
In which ye can rest?  
Will ye not then see? <sup>3400</sup>

73. It is out of His Mercy  
That He has made for you  
Night and Day,—that ye  
May rest therein, and that  
Ye may seek of His Grace;—  
And in order that ye  
May be grateful.

74. ~~The~~ The Day that He will <sup>3401</sup>  
Call on them, He will say:  
"Where are My 'partners'?—  
Whom ye imagined (to be such)?"

75. And from each people  
Shall We draw a witness, <sup>3402</sup>  
And We shall say: "Produce  
Your Proof": then shall they  
Know that the Truth is in  
God (alone), and the (lies)  
Which they invented will  
Leave them in the lurch. <sup>3403</sup>

الْيَلِ سَرْمَدًا إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ  
مَنْ إِلَهَ غَيْرُ اللَّهِ يَأْتِيكُمْ بَعْضُكُمْ  
أَفَلَا تَسْمَعُونَ

۴۲- قُلْ إِنْ أَرَادَ يُتْرَكَ أَنْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمُ النَّهَارَ  
سَرْمَدًا إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ  
مَنْ إِلَهَ غَيْرُ اللَّهِ يَأْتِيكُمْ بَلِيلٌ تَسْكُنُونَ  
فِيهِ أَفَلَا تَبْصُرُونَ

۴۳- وَمِنْ رَحْمَتِهِ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ  
لِتَسْكُنُوا فِيهِ  
وَلِتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ  
وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

۴۴- وَيَوْمَ يُنَادِيهِمْ فَيَقُولُ أَيْنَ شُرَكَائِيَ  
الَّذِينَ كُنْتُمْ تَزْعُمُونَ

۴۵- وَنَرْغَبُ مِنْ كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ شَهِيدًا  
فَقُلْنَا هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ  
فَعَلِمُوا أَنَّ الْحَقَّ لِلَّهِ  
وَصَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ

3400. In verse 71 was mentioned a "perpetual Night," for which the faculty of "hearkening" was appropriate, as all light was shut out. In this verse a perpetual Day is mentioned, for which the faculty of "seeing" is appropriate. Through many doors can the higher knowledge enter our souls. Shall we not use each of them as the occasion demands?

3401. Cf. xxviii. 62 above. The reminiscence of the words closes and rounds off the argument of this Section.

3402. Cf. iv. 41. The Prophet from each People or Nation will bear testimony that he preached the true gospel of Unity, and the People who rejected him will be asked to show the Proof or authority on which they rejected him: Cf. ii. iii.

3403. In that new world, God will be the only Truth or Reality, and all the fancies or lies, which had been invented in this world of reflected or relative truths mixed with illusions, will have vanished, and left those in the lurch who relied on them. Cf. vi. 24.

C. 176.—Men puffed up with wealth, like Qārūn,  
(xxviii. 76-88.) Are not pleasing to God : for wealth  
Is for service, not for hoarding or show.  
In the midst of his pride was Qārūn  
Swallowed up in the earth, and the earth  
Knew him no more ! It is the righteous  
That attain a happy End. Let nothing  
Keep your eyes back from that End :  
Then, and only then, shall ye reach  
The only Reality, the glorious Reality,  
Which is God, Who endureth for ever !

## SECTION 8.

76. Qārūn was, doubtless,<sup>3404</sup>  
Of the people of Moses ; but  
He acted insolently towards them :  
Such were the treasures We<sup>3405</sup>  
Had bestowed on him, that  
Their very keys would  
Have been a burden to  
A body of strong men.<sup>3406</sup>  
Behold, his people said to him :  
" Exult not, for God loveth not  
Those who exult (in riches).

77. "But seek, with the (wealth)  
Which God has bestowed on thee,  
The Home of the Hereafter,<sup>3407</sup>  
Nor forget thy portion in this

۞ اِنْ كَانُوا مِنْ قَوْمٍ مُّؤْمِنٍ  
عَلَيْهِمْ وَاٰتَيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْكُنُوزِ مَا  
اِنْ مَقَابِلَهٗ لَتَنُوزَا بِالْعُصْبَةِ اُولَى الْقُوَّةِ  
اِذْ قَالَ لَهُ قَوْمُهٗ  
لَا تَفْرَحْ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْفَرِحِيْنَ ۝

۞ وَابْتَغُوا فِى مَا اٰتٰكُمُ اللّٰهُ الدّٰرَ الْاٰخِرَةَ  
وَلَا تَنْسُوا نَصِيْبَكُم مِّنْ

3404. Qārūn is identified with the Korah of the English Bible. His story is told in Num. xvi. 1-35. He and his followers, numbering 250 men, rose in rebellion against Moses and Aaron, on the ground that their position and fame in the congregation entitled them to equality in spiritual matters with the Priests,—that they were as holy as any, and they claimed to burn incense at the sacred Altar reserved for the Priests. They had an exemplary punishment : " the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods : they, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them : and they perished from among the congregation."

3405. Qārūn's boundless wealth is described in the Midrashim, or the Jewish compilations based on the oral teachings of the Synagogues, which however exaggerate the weight of the keys to be the equivalent of the load of 300 mules !

3406. 'Uṣbat : a body of men, here used indefinitely. It usually implies a body of 10 to 40 men. The old-fashioned keys were big and heavy, and if there were hundreds of treasure-chests, the keys must have been a great weight. As they were travelling in the desert, the treasures were presumably left behind in Egypt, and only the keys were carried. The disloyal Qārūn had left his heart in Egypt, with his treasures.

3407. That is, 'spend your wealth in charity and good works. It is God Who has given it to you, and you should spend it in God's cause. Nor should you forget the legitimate needs of this life, as misers do, and most people become misers who think too exclusively of their wealth. If wealth is not used properly, there are three evils that follow : (1) its possessor may be a miser and forget all claims due to himself and those about him ; (2) he may forget the higher needs of the poor and needy ; or the good causes which require support ; and (3) he may even misspend on occasions and cause a great deal of harm and mischief." Apparently Qārūn had all three vices.

World : but do thou good,  
As God has been good  
To thee, and seek not  
(Occasions for) mischief in the  
land :  
For God loves not those  
Who do mischief."

78. He said : " This has been given  
To me because of a certain  
Knowledge which I have." <sup>3408</sup>  
Did he not know that God  
Had destroyed, before him,  
(Whole) generations,—which were  
Superior to him in strength  
And greater in the amount  
(Of riches) they had collected ?  
But the wicked are not  
Called (immediately) to account <sup>3409</sup>  
For their sins.

79. So he went forth among  
His people in the (pride  
Of his worldly) glitter.  
Said those whose aim is  
The Life of this World :  
" Oh ! that we had the like  
Of what Qārūn has got !  
For he is truly a lord  
Of mighty good fortune ! " <sup>3410</sup>

80. But those who had been granted  
(True) knowledge said : " Alas  
For you ! The reward of God  
(In the Hereafter) is best  
For those who believe  
And work righteousness : but this

الدُّنْيَا وَأَخْسِنَ كَمَا أَحْسَنَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْكَ  
وَلَا تَتَّبِعِ الْفَسَادَ فِي الْأَرْضِ  
إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُفْسِدِينَ ○

٧٨- قَالَ إِنَّمَا أُوتِيتُهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ عِنْدِي  
أَوَلَمْ يَعْلَم أَنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ أَهْلَكَ  
مِنْ قَبْلِهِ مِنَ الْقُرُونِ  
مَنْ هُوَ أَشَدُّ مِنْهُ قُوَّةً  
وَكَثَرَتْ جَمْعًا  
وَلَا يَنْتَلِ عَنْ ذُنُوبِهِمُ النَّجَرُ مُؤْن ○

٧٩- فَخَرَّ عَلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ فِي زِينَتِهِ  
قَالَ الَّذِينَ يُرِيدُونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا  
يَلْبِسُ لَنَا مِثْلَ مَا أُوتِيَ قَارُونُ  
إِنَّهُ لَدُونُ حَقِّهِ عَظِيمٌ ○

٨٠- وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ  
وَيُكَلِّمُ ثَوَابُ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ  
لِمَنْ آمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا ○

3408. He was so blind and arrogant that he thought that his own merit, knowledge, and skill or cleverness had earned him his wealth, and that now, on account of it, he was superior to everybody else and was entitled to ride rough-shod over them. Fool !—he was soon pulled up by God.

3409. Even Qārūn was given a long run of enjoyment with his fabulous wealth before he had to be removed for the mischief he was doing.

3410. When he was in the hey-day of his glory, worldly people envied him and thought how happy they would be if they were in his place. Not so the people of wisdom and discernment. They knew of a more precious and lasting wealth, which is described in the next verse.

None shall attain, save those  
Who steadfastly persevere  
(in good)."

وَلَا يُلَاقِيهَا إِلَّا الْمُتَّقُونَ ○

81. Then We caused the earth<sup>3411</sup>  
To swallow up him and  
His house; and he had not  
(The least little) party  
To help him against God,  
Nor could he defend himself.

۸۱- فَخَسَفْنَا بِهِ وَبِدَارِهِ الْأَرْضَ  
فَمَا كَانَ لَهُ مِنْ فِئَةٍ يَنْصُرُوهُ مِنْ دُونِ  
اللَّهِ وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُنصُورِينَ ○

82. And those who had envied  
His position the day before  
Began to say on the morrow :  
"Ah ! It is indeed God  
Who enlarges the provision<sup>3412</sup>  
Or restricts it, to any  
Of His servants He pleases !  
Had it not been that God  
Was gracious to us, He  
Could have caused the earth  
To swallow us up ! Ah !  
Those who reject God  
Will assuredly never prosper."

۸۲- وَأَصْبَحَ الَّذِينَ تَبَايَعُوا بِكَ  
يَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ يَقُولُونَ  
وَيَكُنَّ اللَّهُ يُبْسِطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ  
مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَقْدِرُ  
لَوْ لَا أَنْ مَرَحَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْنَا لَخَسَفَ بَنَاءُ  
وَيَكُنَّا لَا نَعْلَمُ إِلَّا كُفْرًا ○

#### SECTION 9.

83. What Home of the Hereafter  
We shall give to those  
Who intend not high-handedness  
Or mischief on earth:<sup>3413</sup>

۸۳- تِلْكَ الدَّارُ الْآخِرَةُ نَجْعَلُهَا لِلَّذِينَ لَا  
يُرِيدُونَ عُلُوًّا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فَسَادًا

3411. See n. 3404 above. Cf. also xvi. 45 and n. 2071. Besides the obvious moral in the literal interpretation of the story, that material wealth is fleeting and may be a temptation and a cause of fall, there are some metaphorical implications that occur to me. (1) Qārūn was with Israel in the wilderness; even his material wealth was of no use to him there; he had the mere empty keys; material wealth has no value in itself, but only a relative and local value. (2) In body he was with Israel in the wilderness, but his heart was in Egypt with its fertility and its slavery. Such is the case of many hypocrites, who like to be seen in righteous company but whose thoughts, longings, and doings are inconsistent with such company. (3) There is no good in this life but comes from God. To think otherwise is to set up a false god besides God. Our own merits are so small that they should never be the object of our idolatry. (4) If Qārūn on account of his wealth was settling himself up in rivalry with Moses and Aaron, he was blind to the fact that spiritual knowledge is far above any little cleverness in worldly affairs. Mob-leaders have no position before spiritual guides.

3412. Provision or Sustenance, both literally and figuratively: wealth and material things in life as well as the things that sustain our higher and spiritual faculties. The rabble, that admired Qārūn's wealth when he was in worldly prosperity, now sees the other side of the question and understands that there are other gifts more precious and desirable, and that these may actually be withheld from men who enjoy wealth and worldly prosperity. In fact it is false prosperity, or no prosperity in the real sense of the word, which is without spiritual well-being.

3413. High-handedness or arrogance, as opposed to submission to the Will of God, Islam. Mischief, as opposed to doing good, bringing forth fruits of righteousness. It is the righteous who will win in the end.

And the End is (best)  
For the righteous.

84. If any does good, the reward  
To him is better than  
His deed; but if any  
Does evil, the doers of evil  
Are only punished (to the extent)  
Of their deeds.<sup>3414</sup>

85. Verily He Who ordained<sup>3415</sup>  
The Qur-an for thee, will bring  
Thee back to the Place<sup>3416</sup>  
Of Return. Say: "My Lord  
Knows best who it is  
That brings true guidance,  
And who is in manifest error."<sup>3417</sup>

86. And thou hadst not expected  
That the Book would be  
Sent to thee except as  
A Mercy from thy Lord:<sup>3418</sup>  
Therefore lend not thou support  
In any way to those

وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ○

٨٤- مَنْ جَاءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهُ خَيْرٌ مِنْهَا  
وَمَنْ جَاءَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَلَا يُجْزَى الَّذِينَ  
عَمِلُوا الشَّيْئَاتِ إِلَّا مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ○

٨٥- إِنَّ الَّذِي فَرَضَ عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ  
لَرَأَاكَ إِلَى مَعَادٍ  
قُلْ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَنْ جَاءَ  
بِالْهُدَى وَمَنْ هُوَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ ○

٨٦- وَمَا كُنْتَ تَرْجُو أَنْ يُلْقَى  
إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابُ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً مِنْ رَبِّكَ  
فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ ظَهِيرًا

3414. A good deed has its sure reward, and that reward will be better than the merits of the doer, An evil deed may be forgiven by repentance, but in any case will not be punished with a severer penalty than justice demands.

3415. That is: ordered in His wisdom and mercy that the Qur-ān should be revealed, containing guidance for conduct in this life and the next, and further ordered that it should be read out and taught and its principles observed in practice. It is because of this teaching and preaching that the holy Prophet was persecuted, but as God sent the Qur-ān, He will see that those who follow it will not eventually suffer, but be restored to happiness in the Place of Return, for which see next note,

3416. *Place of Return*: (1) a title of Mecca; (2) the occasion when we shall be restored to the Presence of our Lord. It is said that this verse was revealed at *Juḥfa*, on the road from Mecca to Medina, a short distance from Mecca, on the Hijrat journey. The Prophet was sad at heart, and this was given as consolation to him. If this was the particular occasion, the general meaning would refer the Place of Return to the occasion of the Resurrection, when all true values will be restored, however they may be disturbed by the temporary interference of Evil in this life,

3417. God knows the true from the false, and if we are persecuted for our Faith and attacked or spoken ill of because we dare to do right, our surest refuge is an appeal to God rather than to men.

3418. Revelation and the preaching of Truth may in the beginning bring persecution, conflict, and sorrow in its train; but in reality it is the truest mercy from God, which comes even without our expecting it, as it came to the apostles without their consciously asking for it. This is proved in the history of Moses related in this Sūra, and the history of the holy Prophet which it is meant to illustrate.

Who reject (God's Message).<sup>3419</sup>

87. And let nothing keep thee  
Back from the Signs of God  
After they have been revealed  
To thee: and invite (men)  
To thy Lord, and be not  
In the company of those  
Who join gods with God.<sup>3420</sup>
88. And call not, besides God,  
On another god. There is  
No god but He. Everything  
(That exists) will perish  
Except His own Self.<sup>3421</sup>  
To Him belongs the Command,  
And to Him will ye  
(All) be brought back.

لِلْكَافِرِينَ ۚ  
وَلَا يَصُدُّكَ عَنْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ  
بَعْدَ إِذْ أُنْزِلَتْ إِلَيْكَ  
وَأَدْعُ إِلَىٰ سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ  
وَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُمِشِكِينَ ۚ  
۝۸۸ وَلَا تَدْعُ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ  
لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ  
كُلُّ شَيْءٍ هَالِكٌ إِلَّا وَجْهَهُ  
لَهُ السُّكُوتُ وَالنَّهْيُ يُرْجَعُونَ ۚ



3419. If God's Message is unpalatable to Evil and is rejected by it, those who accept it may (in their natural human feelings) sometimes wonder that such should be the case, and whether it is really God's Will that the conflict which ensues should be pursued. Any such hesitation would lend unconscious support to the aggressions of evil and should be discarded. The servant of God stands forth boldly as His *Mujāhid* (fighter of the good fight), daring all, and knowing that God is behind him.

3420. The soldier of God, having taken up the fight against Evil, and knowing that he is in touch with the true Light, never yields an inch of ground. He is always to the fore in inviting others to his own ranks, but he himself refuses to be with those who worship anything else but God.

3421. This sums up the lesson of the whole Sūra. The only Reality is God. His "Face" or Personality or Being is what we should seek, knowing that it is the only enduring thing of which we can have any conception. The whole phenomenal world is subject to flux and change and will pass away, but He will endure for ever. If we think of an impersonal God, an abstract force of good, we cannot reconcile it with the vital Self or Being, of which we have a faint echo or reflection in our intensest moments of spiritual exaltation. We know then that what we call our own Self has no meaning, for there is only one true Self, and that is God. This is also the Advaita doctrine of Śhrī Shankara in his exposition of the *Bṛihad-aranyaka Upanishad*.

INTRODUCTION TO SŪRA XXIX ('*Aḥkābūt*).

This Sūra is the last of the series begun with S. xvii, in which the growth of the spiritual man as an individual is considered, especially illustrated by the way in which the great apostles were prepared for their work and received their mission, and the nature of Revelation in relation to the environments in which it was promulgated. (See Introduction to S. xvii.) It also closes the sub-series beginning with S. xxvi, which is concerned with the spiritual Light, and the reactions to it at certain periods of spiritual history. (See Introduction to S. xxvi.)

The last Sūra closed with a reference to the doctrine of the *Ma'ād*, or final Return of man to God. This theme is further developed here; and as it is continued in the subsequent three Sūras all bearing the Abbreviated Letters A.L.M., it forms a connecting link between the present series and those three Sūras.

In particular, emphasis is laid here on the necessity of linking actual conduct with the reception of God's revelation, and reference is again made to the stories of Noah, Abraham, and Lot among the apostles, and the stories of Midian, 'Ād, Thamūd, and Pharaoh among the rejecters of God's Message. This world's life is contrasted with the real Life of the Hereafter.

Chronologically the main Sūra belongs to the late middle Meccan period, but the chronology has no significance except as showing how clearly the vision of the Future was revealed long before the Hijrat, to the struggling Brotherhood of Islām.

*Summary.*

Belief is tested by trial in life and practical conduct: though Noah lived 950 years, his people refused Faith, and Abraham's generation threatened to burn Abraham (xxix. 1-27, and C. 177).

Lot's people not only rejected God's Message but publicly defied him in sin; the 'Ād and the Thamūd had intelligence but misused it, and Qārūn, Pharaoh, and Hāmān perished for their overweening arrogance: they found their worldly power as frail as a spider's web (xxix. 28-44, and C. 178).

The Qur-ān as a revelation stands on its own merits and is a Sign: it teaches the distinction between Right and Wrong, and shows the importance and excellence of the Hereafter (xxix. 45-69, and C. 179).

C. 177.—Faith must be tested in the conflicts  
(xxix. 1-27.) Of practical life, but Good can never  
Be submerged. On the contrary God  
Will wash off all stains from those  
Who strive, and admit them to the Fellowship  
Of the Righteous. Not so the hypocrites  
And those who reject Faith. Their hearts  
Are diseased, and they will not accept.  
The right though a Noah preached to them  
For a thousand years, or an Abraham  
Reasoned with them on God's most wonderful  
Providence. But the true will ever search out  
The Truth, and Truth will always prevail.

## Sura XXIX.

'Ankabut, or the Spider.

*In the name of God, Most Gracious,  
Most Merciful.*

1. **A. L. M.**<sup>3422</sup>
2. Do men think that  
They will be left alone  
On saying, "We believe",<sup>3423</sup>  
And that they will not  
Be tested?
3. We did test those  
Before them, and God will  
Certainly know<sup>3424</sup> those who are  
True from those who are false.
4. Do those who practise  
Evil think that they  
Will get the better of us?  
Evil is their judgment!<sup>3425</sup>
5. For those whose hopes are  
In the meeting with God<sup>3426</sup>  
(In the Hereafter, let them strive);  
For the Term (appointed)



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

اَلَمْ

۲- اَحَسِبَ الْاِنْسَانُ اَنْ يُّذَكَّرَ  
اَنْ يَقُولُوا اٰمَنَّا وَهُمْ لَا يُفْتَنُونَ

۳- وَلَقَدْ فَتَنَّا الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ  
اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ صَدَقُوا وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ الْكٰذِبِيْنَ

۴- اَمْ حَسِبَ الَّذِيْنَ يَعْمَلُونَ السَّيِّئٰتِ  
اَنْ يَّسْتَفْتِنُوْا سَآءَ مَا يَحْكُمُوْنَ

۵- مَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا لِقَاءَ اللّٰهِ  
فَاِنَّ اَجَلَ

3422. For these Abbreviated Letters see n. 25 to ii. 1. We are asked to contrast, in our present life, the real inner life against the outer life, and learn from the past about the struggles of the soul which upholds God's Truth, against the environment of evil, which resists it, and to turn our thoughts to the Ma'ad, or man's future destiny in the Hereafter.

3423. Mere lip profession of Faith is not enough. It must be tried and tested in the real turmoil of life. The test will be applied in all kinds of circumstances, in individual life and in relation to the environment around us, to see whether we can strive constantly and put God above Self. Much pain, sorrow, and self-sacrifice may be necessary, not because they are good in themselves, but because they will purify us, like fire applied to a goldsmith's crucible to burn out the dross.

3424. The word "know" is used here more in the sense of testing than of acquiring knowledge. God is All-Knowing. He needs no test to increase His own knowledge, but the test is to burn out the dross within ourselves, as explained in the last note.

3425. If the enemies of Truth imagine that they will "be first" by destroying Truth before it takes root, they are sadly at fault, for their own persecution may help to plant God's Truth more firmly in men's hearts.

3426. The men of Faith look forward to God. Their quest is God, and the object of their hopes is the meeting with God. They should strive with might and main to serve Him in this life, for this life is short, and the Term appointed for their probation will soon be over.



By God is surely coming: <sup>3427</sup>  
And He hears and knows  
(All things).

6. And if any strive (with might  
And main), they do so  
For their own souls: <sup>3428</sup>  
For God is free of all  
Needs from all creation.

7. ~~And~~ Those who believe and work  
Righteous deeds,—from them  
Shall We blot out all evil  
(That may be) in them, <sup>3429</sup>  
And We shall reward  
Them according to  
The best of their deeds.

8. We have enjoined on man  
Kindness to parents: but if  
They (either of them) strive  
(To force) thee to join  
With Me (in worship)  
Anything of which thou hast  
No knowledge, <sup>3430</sup> obey them not.  
Ye have (all) to return  
To Me, and I will  
Tell you (the truth)  
Of all that ye did. <sup>3431</sup>

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ

۞ وَمَنْ جَاهِدْ فَإِنَّمَا يُجَاهِدُ لِنَفْسِهِ  
إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَغَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

۞ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ  
لَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْرَهُم بِأَبْصَرٍ  
وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْرَهُم بِأَبْصَرٍ  
وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْرَهُم بِأَبْصَرٍ

۞ وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ حُسْنًا  
وَلَإِنْ جَاهَدَاكَ لِتُشْرِكَ بِي  
مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا  
إِلَىٰ مَرْجِعِكُم  
فَأَنْتُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ۞

3427. The Term (*ajal*) may signify : (1) the time appointed for death, which ends the probation of this life; (2) the time appointed for this life, so that we can prepare for the Hereafter; the limit will soon expire. In either case the ultimate meaning is the same. We must strive *now*, and not postpone anything for the future. And we must realise and remember that every prayer we make to God is heard by Him, and that every unspoken wish or motive of our heart, good or bad, is known to Him, and goes to swell our spiritual account.

3428. All our striving enures to our own spiritual benefit. When we speak of serving God, it is not that we confer any benefit on Him. For He has no needs, and is independent of all His Creation. In conforming to His Will, we are seeking our own good, as in yielding to evil we are doing harm to ourselves.

3429. In striving to purify our Faith and our Life, we are enabled to rise above our own Karma, for God will forgive any evil in our past, purify any tendencies towards evil which we may have inherited from that past, and help to the attainment of a Future based on the best of what we have done rather than on the poor average of our own merits. The atonement or expiation is by God's Mercy, not by our merits or the merits or sacrifice of anyone else.

3430. That is, no certainty, in virtue of the spiritual light. In matters of faith and worship, even parents have no right to force their children. They cannot and must not hold up before them any worship but that of the One True God.

3431. Children and parents must all remember that they have all to go before God's tribunal, and answer, each for his own deeds. In cases where one set of people have lawful authority over another set of people (as in the case of parents and children), and the two differ in important matters like that of Faith, the latter are justified in rejecting authority: the apparent conflict will be solved when the whole truth is revealed to all eyes in the final judgment.

9. And those who believe  
And work righteous deeds,—  
Them shall We admit  
To the company of the  
Righteous.<sup>3432</sup>

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ  
لَنُدْخِلَنَّهُمْ فِي الصَّالِحِينَ ○

10. Then there are among men  
Such as say, "We believe  
In God"; but when they suffer  
Affliction in (the cause of) God,  
They treat men's oppression  
As if it were the Wrath  
Of God! And if help  
Comes (to thee) from thy Lord,  
They are sure to say,<sup>3433</sup>  
"We have (always) been  
With you!" Does not God  
Know best all that is  
In the hearts of all Creation?

بِمِنْ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَقُولُ آمَنَّا  
بِاللهِ فَإِذَا أَوْدَى فِي اللهِ  
جَعَلَ فِتْنَةً لِلنَّاسِ كَعَذَابِ اللهِ  
وَلَكِنْ جَاءَ نَصْرٌ مِنْ رَبِّكَ  
لَيَقُولُنَّ إِنَّا كُنَّا مَعَكُمْ  
أَوَلَيْسَ اللهُ بِأَعْلَمَ بِمَا فِي صُدُورِ  
الْعَالَمِينَ ○

11. And God most certainly knows  
Those who believe, and as certainly  
Those who are Hypocrites.<sup>3434</sup>

وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ اللهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا  
وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ ○

12. And the Unbelievers say  
To those who believe:  
"Follow our path, and we  
Will bear (the consequences)<sup>3435</sup>  
Of your faults." Never  
In the least will they  
Bear their faults: in fact  
They are liars!

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا  
اتَّبِعُوا سَبِيلَنَا وَلْنَحْمِلْ خَطِيئَتَكُمْ  
وَمَا هُمْ بِحَامِلِينَ مِنْ خَطِيئَتِهِمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ  
إِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ ○

3432. The picking up again of the words which began verse 7 above shows that the same subject is now pursued from another aspect. The expiation or reward which was first spoken of is not so much a tangible thing as a restoration of status. The striving in righteous deeds will restore fallen man to the society of the Righteous,—the ideal Fellowship described in iv. 69 and n. 586.

3433. Cf. ix. 56, and other passages where the cunning of the Hypocrites is exposed. The man who turns away from Faith in adversity and only claims the friendship of the Faithful when there is something to be gained by it, is worthy of a double condemnation; first because he rejected Faith and Truth, and secondly because he falsely pretended to be of those whom he feared or hated in his heart. But nothing in all Creation is concealed from God.

3434. Cf. xxix. 3 above. The general opposition between Truth and Falsehood is now brought down to the specific case of the Hypocrites, who are against the Faith militant but swear friendship with it when it seems to be gaining ground. The argument is rounded off with the next three verses.

3435. Besides the hypocrite there is another type of man who openly scoffs at Faith. 'Take life as we take it,' he says; 'we shall bear your sins.' As if they could! Each soul bears its own burdens, and no one else can bear them. The principle also applies to the type of man who preaches vicarious atonement, for, if followed to its logical conclusion, it means both injustice and irresponsibility, and puts quite a different complexion on the nature of sin.

13. They will bear their own  
Burden, and (other) burdens  
Along with their own,<sup>3436</sup>  
And on the Day of Judgment  
They will be called to account  
For their falsehoods.

١٣- وَيَكْفُرُونَ أَفْئَالَهُمْ  
وَأَفْئَالَهُمْ أَفْئَالَهُمْ وَيَكْفُرُونَ يَوْمَ  
الْقِيَامَةِ عَمَّا كَانُوا يَفْكُرُونَ

## SECTION 2.

14. ~~We~~ (once) sent Noah  
To his people, and he tarried  
Among them a thousand years<sup>3437</sup>  
Less fifty; but the Deluge  
Overwhelmed them while they  
(Persisted in) sin.

١٤- وَلَقَدْ أَوْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ فَلَبِثَ  
فِيهِمْ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ إِلَّا خَمْسِينَ عَامًا  
فَأَخَذَهُمُ الطُّوفَانُ وَهُمْ ظَالِمُونَ

15. But We saved him  
And the Companions  
Of the Ark, and We made  
The (Ark) a Sign  
For all Peoples!

١٥- فَصَلَّاهُ وَآصْحَابَ السَّفِينَةِ  
وَجَعَلْنَاهَا آيَةً لِلْعَالَمِينَ

16. And (We also saved)  
Abraham: behold, he said<sup>3438</sup>  
To his people, "Serve God  
And fear Him: that  
Will be best for you—  
If ye understand!

١٦- وَإِبْرَاهِيمَ إِذْ قَالَ  
لِقَوْمِهِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاتَّقُوهُ  
ذَٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

17. "For ye do worship idols  
Besides God, and ye invent  
Falsehood. The things that ye  
Worship besides God have  
No power to give you sustenance:

١٧- إِنَّمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَوْثَانًا وَتَخْلُقُونَ إِفْكًا إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَتَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ لَكُمْ رَزَقًا

3436. Besides the burden of their own infidelity, they will bear the burden of deluding others with falsehood.

3437. The story of Noah and his Flood is not told here. It is told in other places; e.g. see xi. 25-48 or xxvi 105-122. It is only referred to here to point out that Noah's period lasted a long time, 950 years. (Cf. Gen. ix. 28-29, where his whole age is declared to have been 950 years, of which 350 years were after the Flood.) In spite of this long period, his contemporaries failed to listen, and they were destroyed. But the story of the Ark remains an everlasting Sign and Warning to mankind—a Sign of deliverance to the righteous and of destruction to the wicked.

3438. The story of Abraham has been told in various phases in different passages. The ones most germane to the present passage are: xxi. 51-72 (his being cast into the fire and being saved from it); and xix. 41-49 (his voluntary exile from the home of his fathers). Here the story is not told, but is referred to in order to stress the following points: (1) Abraham's people only responded to his preaching by threatening to burn him (xxix. 16-18, 24); (2) evil consorts with evil but will have a rude awakening (xxix. 25); (3) the good adhere to the good, and are blessed (xxix. 26-27). Note that the passage xxix. 19-23 is a parenthetical comment, though some Commentators treat a portion of it as part of Abraham's speech.

Then seek ye sustenance<sup>3439</sup>  
From God, serve Him,  
And be grateful to Him :  
To Him will be your return.

فَاَتَسْتَعِينُوا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الرَّزْقَ وَالْعِثَّةَ  
وَالشُّكْرَ وَالْإِلَهَ الرَّبَّ تَرْجِعُونَ ○

18. " And if ye reject (the Message),  
So did generations before you :  
And the duty of the apostle  
Is only to preach publicly  
(And clearly)."

وَأِنْ تَكْفُرُوا فَقَدْ كَذَّبَ أُمَمٌ مِّنْ  
قَبْلِكُمْ

19. See they not how God  
Originates creation, then<sup>3440</sup>  
Repeats it : truly that  
Is easy for God.

وَمَا عَلَى الرَّسُولِ إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ ○  
أَوَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَخْلُقُ  
تَقْرِيعًا إِنَّ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ ○

20. Say : " Travel through the earth"<sup>3441</sup>  
And see how God did  
Originate creation ; so will  
God produce a later creation :  
For God has power  
Over all things.

كُلُّ سَيِّئَةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَإِنظُرُوا كَيْفَ  
يَخْلُقُ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ اللَّهُ يُنشِئُ الْخَلْقَ الْأَخْرَجَ  
إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ○

21. " He punishes whom He pleases,  
And He grants mercy to whom

يُعَذِّبُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَرْحَمُ مَنْ

3439. *Sustenance* : in the symbolic as well as the literal sense. Seek from God all that is necessary for your upkeep and development, and for preparing you for your future Destiny. Lay all your hopes in Him and in no one else. Dedicate yourselves to His worship. He will give you all that is necessary for your growth and well-being, and you should show your gratitude to Him by conforming your will entirely to His.

3440. The originating of creation is the creation of primeval matter. The repetition of the process of creation goes on constantly, for at every moment new processes are being called into being by the creative power of God, and according to His Laws. And the final creation as far as man is concerned will be in the Ma'ad, when the whole world as man sees it will be entirely newly created on a different plane. As far as God is concerned, there is nothing final,—no first and last, for He is infinite. He was before our First and will be after our Last, and if there is any meaning in these relative terms, He is the real First and the real Last.

3441. *Travel through the earth* : again, literally as well as symbolically. If we actually go through this wide earth, we shall see the wonderful things in His Creation—the Grand Canyon and the Niagaras in America, beautiful harbours like that at Sydney in Australia, Fujiyama, the Himalayas, and Elburz in Asia, the Nile with its wonderful cataracts in Africa, the Fjords of Norway, the Geysers of Iceland, the city of the midnight sun in Tromsø, and innumerable wonders everywhere. But wonders upon wonders are disclosed in the constitution of matter itself, the atom, and the forces of energy, as also in the instincts of animals, and the minds and capacities of man. And there is no limit to these things. Worlds upon worlds are created and transformed every moment, within and presumably beyond man's vision. From what we know we can judge of the unknown.

He pleases, and towards Him  
Are ye turned.<sup>3442</sup>

22. "Not on earth nor in heaven  
Will ye be able (fleeing)  
To frustrate (His Plan),  
Nor have ye, besides God,  
Any protector or helper."

### SECTION 3.

23. Those who reject the Signs  
Of God and the Meeting  
With Him (in the Hereafter),—  
It is they who shall despair  
Of My mercy: it is they<sup>3443</sup>  
Who will (suffer)  
A most grievous Penalty.

24. So naught was the answer  
Of (Abraham's) people except  
That they said: "Slay him  
Or burn him." But God  
Did save him from the Fire.<sup>3444</sup>  
Verily in this are Signs  
For people who believe.

25. And he said: "For you,  
Ye have taken (for worship)  
Idols besides God, out of  
Mutual love and regard<sup>3445</sup>

إِلَٰهًا وَالَّذِينَ تَقُولُونَ

وَمَا أَنْتُمْ بِمُعْجِزِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَ  
لَا فِي السَّمَاءِ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مِنْ  
قَلْبٍ وَلَا نَجْدٍ ۝

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَلِقَائِهِ  
أُولَٰئِكَ يُسْأَلُونَ مِنْ عَذَابِي  
وَأُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ۝

هَـمَّا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهِ إِلَّا  
أَن قَالُوا اقْتُلُوهُ أَوْ حَرِّقُوهُ  
فَأَنجَاهُ اللَّهُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ  
إِن فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ۝

هـ وَقَالَ إِنَّمَا اتَّخَذْتُمْ  
مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَوْثَانًا مَّوَدَّةَ

3442. I think *ilāhi tuqlabūn* is better translated "towards Him are ye turned" than "towards Him will be your return", as it implies not only the return of man to God in the Hereafter (*turjaʿūn* in verse 17 above) but also the fact explained in verse 22 that man's needs are always to be obtained from God; man cannot frustrate God's designs, and can have no help or protection except from God: man has always to face God, whether man obeys God or tries to ignore God. Man will never be able to defeat God's Plan. According to His wise Will and Plan, He will grant His grace or withhold it from man.

3443. The emphasis is on "they" (*ulāika*). It is only the people who ignore or reject God's Signs and reject a Hereafter, that will find themselves in despair and suffering. God's Mercy is open to all, but if any reject His Mercy, they must suffer.

3444. See xxi. 66-70. Abraham was cast into the fire, but he was unhurt, by the grace of God. So righteous people suffer no harm from the plots of the wicked. But they must leave the environment of evil even if they have to forsake their ancestral home, as Abraham did.

3445. In sin and wickedness there is as much log-rolling as in politics. Evil men humour each other and support each other; they call each other's vices by high-sounding names. They call it mutual regard or friendship or love; at the lowest, they call it toleration. Perhaps they flourish in this life by such arts. But they deceive themselves, and they deceive each other. What will be their relations in the Hereafter? They will disown each other when each has to answer on the principle of personal responsibility. Each will accuse the others of misleading him, and they will curse each other. But there will then be no help, and they must suffer in the Fire.

Between yourselves in this life;  
But on the Day of Judgment  
Ye shall disown each other  
And curse each other:  
And your abode will be  
The Fire, and ye shall have  
None to help."

بَيْنَكُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا  
تَكْفُرُ الْيَقِينُ يَكْفُرُ بَعْضُكُمْ بِبَعْضٍ  
وَيَلْعَنُ بَعْضُكُمْ بَعْضًا ۖ وَمَا لَكُمْ أَلَاءُ  
وَمَا لَكُمْ مِنْ مُدِيرِينَ ۝

26. But Lūṭ had faith in Him: <sup>3446</sup>  
He said: "I will leave  
Home for the sake of  
My Lord: for He is  
Exalted in Might, and Wise."

۲۶- فَأَمِنَ لَهُ لُوطٌ وَقَالَ إِنِّي  
مُهَاجِرٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّي  
إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ۝

27. And We gave (Abraham)  
Isaac and Jacob, and ordained  
Among his progeny Prophethood <sup>3447</sup>  
And Revelation, and We  
Granted him his reward  
In this life; and he was  
In the Hereafter (of the company)  
Of the Righteous. <sup>3448</sup>

۲۷- وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَجَعَلْنَا  
فِي ذُرِّيَّتِهِ النُّبُوَّةَ وَالْكِتَابَ  
وَأَعْزَمْنَا أَجْرَهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا  
وَأَوَّاهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ لِمَنِ الصُّلْحِينَ ۝

C. 178.—Worldly power cannot through sin  
(xxix 28-44.) Defy the right, as was proved in the ministry.

Of Lot; nor can Intelligence misused  
Stand in the place of God's Light; nor  
Can boastful insolence do aught  
But dig its own grave. The strength  
And skill, the beauty and power, of this world's  
Life are no more than a Spider's Web,  
Flimsy before the force of the eternal  
Verities that flow from God Supreme!

28. And (remember) Lūṭ: behold,  
He said to his people:

۲۸- وَلُوطًا إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ

3446. Lot was a nephew of Abraham. He adhered to Abraham's teaching and faith and accepted voluntary exile with him, for Abraham left the home of his fathers in Chaldaea and migrated to Syria and Palestine, where God gave him increase and prosperity, and a numerous family, who upheld the flag of Unity and the Light of God.

3447. Isaac was Abraham's son and Jacob his grandson, and among his progeny was included Ismā'il, the eldest son of Abraham. Each of these became a fountain-head of Prophecy and Revelation, Isaac and Jacob through Moses, and Ismā'il through the holy Apostle Muḥammad.

3448. Cf. xxix. 9, and iv. 69, n. 586.

"Ye do commit lewdness,  
Such as no people in Creation<sup>3449</sup>  
(Ever) committed before you.

29. "Do ye indeed approach men,  
And cut off the highway?<sup>3450</sup>  
And practise wickedness  
(Even) in your councils?"  
But his people gave no answer  
But this: they said:  
"Bring us the Wrath of God  
If thou tellest the truth."<sup>3451</sup>

30. He said: "O my Lord!  
Help Thou me against people  
Who do mischief!"

#### SECTION 4.

31. ~~W~~hen Our Messengers came  
To Abraham with the good news,<sup>3452</sup>  
They said: "We are indeed  
Going to destroy the people  
Of this township:<sup>3453</sup> for truly  
They are (addicted to) crime."

إِنَّمَا كُنْتُمْ لَنَا فِتْنَةً  
مَا سَبَقَكُمْ بِهَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ مِنَ الْعَالَمِينَ

٢٩- أَوَلَمْ تَكُنْ لَنَا فِتْنَةً  
وَتَقْطَعُونَ السَّبِيلَ؟

وَتَأْتُونَ فِي كَادٍ يَكْفُرُ  
فَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ  
قَالُوا الْيَتِيمَ  
بِعَذَابِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِينَ

٣٠- قَالَ رَبِّ انصُرْنِي

عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْفٰسِقِينَ

٣١- وَكَلَّمَآءُتْ سُلَيْمٰنَ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ بِالْبَشٰرَى  
قَالُوْا اِنَّا مُهْلِكُوْكُمْ اَهْلَ هٰذِهِ الْقَرْيَةِ  
اِنَّ اَهْلَهَا كَانُوْا ظٰلِمِيْنَ

3449. Cf. vii. 80. A discreet reference is made to their unspeakable crimes, which were against the laws of all nature.

3450. They infested highways and committed their horrible crimes not only secretly, but openly and publicly, even in their assemblies. Some Commentators understand "cutting off the highway" to refer to highway robberies: this is possible, and it is also possible that the crimes in their assemblies may have been injustice, rowdiness, etc. But the context seems to refer to their own special horrible crime, and the point here seems to be that they were not ashamed of it and that they practised it publicly. Degradation could go no further.

3451. This is another instance of their effrontery, in addition to that mentioned in vii 82: the two supplement each other. Here the point emphasised is that they did not believe in God or His Punishment, and dared God's Apostle Lot to bring about the Punishment if he could. And it did come and destroyed them.

3452. See xi. 69-76. The angels, who were coming on the mission to destroy the people who were polluting the earth with their crimes, called on their way on Abraham to give the good news of the birth of a son to him in his old age. When they told him their destination, he feared for his nephew who he knew was there. They reassured him and then came on to Lot.

3453. By translating "township" I imply the two neighbouring populations of Sodom and Gomorrah, who had already gone too far in their crime, their shamelessness, and their defiance, to profit by any mercy from God.

32. He said: " But there is  
Lut there." They said :  
" Well do we know who  
Is there : we will certainly  
Save him and his following, —  
Except his wife : she is  
Of those who lag behind ! " <sup>3454</sup>

٣٢- قَالَ إِنْ فِيهَا لُوطًا قَالُوا  
مَنْ أَكَلُمُ يَمِينٍ فِيهَا  
لَنَنْصِتَنَّ وَأَهْلَكَ  
إِلَّا امْرَأَتَهُ كَانَتْ مِنَ الْغَابِرِينَ ○

33. And when Our Messengers  
Came to Lut, he was  
Grieved on their account,  
And felt himself powerless <sup>3455</sup>  
(To protect) them : but they said :  
" Fear thou not, nor grieve :  
We are (here) to save thee  
And thy following, except  
Thy wife : she is  
Of those who lag behind.

٣٣- وَلَمَّا أَنْ جَاءَتْ رُسُلُنَا لُوطًا  
سِيقَ إِتْلَهُمْ وَضَاقَ بِهِمْ ذَمْرًا  
وَقَالُوا لَا تَعْظُمْ وَلَا تَخْزَنْ  
إِنَّا مُنْقِضُونَ وَأَهْلَكَ إِلَّا  
امْرَأَتَكَ كَانَتْ مِنَ الْغَابِرِينَ ○

34. " For we are going to  
Bring down on the people  
Of this township a Punishment <sup>3456</sup>  
From heaven, because they  
Have been wickedly rebellious."

٣٤- إِنَّا مُنْزِلُونَ عَلَى أَهْلِ  
هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةِ رِجْزًا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ  
بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ ○

35. And We have left thereof  
An evident Sign, <sup>3457</sup>  
For any people who  
(Care to) understand.

٣٥- وَلَقَدْ تَرَكْنَا مِنْهَا آيَةً بَيِّنَةً  
لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ○

3454. She was not loyal to her husband. Tradition says that she belonged to the wicked people, and was not prepared to leave them. She had no faith in the mission either of her husband or of the angels who had come as his guests.

3455. This part of the story may be read in greater detail in xi. 77-83.

3456. The Punishment was a rain of brimstone, which completely overwhelmed the Cities, with possibly an earthquake and a volcanic eruption (See xi. 82).

3457. The whole tract on the east side of the Dead Sea (where the Cities were situated) is covered with sulphureous salts and is deadly to animal and plant life. The Dead Sea itself is called in Arabic the Bahr Lut (the sea of Lot). It is a scene of utter desolation, that should stand as a Symbol of the Destruction that awaits Sin.



36. **And** to the Madyan (people)  
 (We sent) their brother Shu'aib.  
 Then he said: "O my people!  
 Serve God, and fear the Last  
 Day: nor commit evil  
 On the earth, with intent  
 To do mischief."

٣٦- وَإِلَىٰ مَدْيَنَ أَخَاهُمْ شُعَيْبًا  
 فَقَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَارْجُوا الْيَوْمَ  
 الْآخِرَ  
 وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ ۝

37. But they rejected him:  
 Then the mighty Blast<sup>3458</sup>  
 Seized them, and they lay  
 Prostrate in their homes  
 By the morning.

٣٧- فَكَانَ يَوْمَئِذٍ  
 فَكَانَ يَوْمَئِذٍ الرِّجْفَةُ  
 فَاصْبَحُوا فِي دَارِهِمْ جَاثِينَ ۝

38. (**R**emember also) the 'Ad  
 And the Thamūd (people):<sup>3459</sup>  
 Clearly will appear to you  
 From (the traces) of their buildings  
 (Their fate): the Evil One  
 Made their deeds alluring<sup>3460</sup>  
 To them, and kept them back  
 From the Path, though they  
 Were gifted with Intelligence  
 And Skill.

٣٨- وَعَادًا وَثَمُودًا  
 وَقَدْ تَبَيَّنَ لَكُم مِّنْ مَّسْكِنِهِمْ  
 وَتَرَىٰ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانَ أَعْمَاهُمْ  
 فَصَدَّ هُمْ عَنِ النَّبِيلِ  
 وَكَانُوا مُسْتَبْصِرِينَ ۝

3458. The story of Shu'aib and the Madyan people is only referred to here. It is told in xi, 84-95. Their besetting sin was fraud and commercial immorality. Their punishment was a mighty Blast, such as accompanies volcanic eruptions. The point of the reference here is that they went about doing mischief on the earth, and never thought of the Ma'ad or the Hereafter; the particular theme of this Sura. The same point is made by the brief references in the following two verses to the 'Ad and the Thamūd, and to Qārūn, Pharaoh, and Hāmān, though the besetting sin in each case was different. The Midianites were a commercial people and trafficked from land to land; their frauds are well described as spreading "mischief on the earth".

3459. For the 'Ad people see vii. 65-72, and n. 1040, and for the Thamūd, vii. 73-79, and n. 1043. The remains of their buildings show (1) that they were gifted with great intelligence and skill; (2) that they were proud of their material civilization; and (3) their destruction argues how the greatest material civilization and resources cannot save a People who disobey God's moral law.

3460. They were so arrogant and self-satisfied, that they missed the higher purpose of life, and strayed clean away from the Path of God. Though their intelligence should have kept them straight, Evil made them crooked and led them and kept them astray:

39. (Remember also) Qārūn,<sup>3461</sup>  
Pharaoh, and Hāmān; there came  
To them Moses with Clear Signs,  
But with insolence they behaved  
On the earth; yet they  
Could not overreach (Us).

وَقَارُونَ وَفِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامَانَ  
وَلَقَدْ جَاءَهُمْ مُوسَى بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ  
فَأَنكَرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَكَانُوا سَاقِطِينَ

40. Each one of them We seized  
For his crime: of them,  
Against some We sent  
A violent tornado (with showers<sup>3462</sup>  
Of stones); some were caught  
By a (mighty) Blast;<sup>3463</sup> some  
We caused the earth<sup>3464</sup>  
To swallow up; and some  
We drowned (in the waters):<sup>3465</sup>  
It was not God Who  
Injured (or oppressed) them:  
They injured (and oppressed)  
Their own souls.

مَثَلًا لِّأُولِي السُّلُوبِ  
فَمِثْلُهُم مِّنْ أَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِ حَاصِبًا  
وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ أَخَذَتْهُ الطَّيْفَةُ  
وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ خَسَفْنَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ  
وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ غَرَقْنَا  
وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُظْلِمَهُمْ  
وَلَكِنْ كَانُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ

41. The parable of those who  
Take protectors other than God  
Is that of the Spider,  
Who builds (to itself)

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ  
أَوْلِيَاءَ كَمَثَلِ الْعَنْكَبُوتِ إِذَا أَخَذَتْ

3461. For Qārūn see xxviii. 76-82; Pharaoh is mentioned frequently in the Qur-ān, but he is mentioned in association with Hāmān in xxviii. 6, and their blasphemous arrogance and defiance of God in xxviii. 38. They thought such a lot of themselves, but they came to an evil end.

3462. For ḥāṣib (violent tornado with showers of stones), see xvii. 68; this punishment was inflicted on the Cities of the Plain, to which Lot preached (liv. 34). Some Commentators think that this also applied to the 'Ad, but their punishment is described as by a violent and unseasonable cold wind (xii. 16; liv. 19 and lxix. 6), such as blows in sand-storms in the Aḥqāf, the region of shifting sands which was in their territory.

3463. For ḡāṭat (Blast) see xi. 67 and n. 1561, as also n. 1047 to vii. 78 and n. 1996 to xv. 73. This word is used in describing the fate of (1) the Thamūd (xi. 67); Madyan (xi. 94); the population to which Lūṭ preached (xv. 73); and the Rocky Tract (Ḥijr, xv. 83), part of the territory of the Thamūd; also in the Parable of the City to which came three apostles, who found a single believer (xxxvi. 29).

3464. This was the fate of Qārūn: see xxviii. 81. Cf. also xvi. 45 and n. 2071.

3465. This was the fate of the hosts of Pharaoh and Hāmān (xxviii. 40) as well as the wicked generation of Noah (xxvi. 120).

A house; but truly  
The flimsiest of houses<sup>3466</sup>  
Is the Spider's house;—<sup>3470</sup>  
If they but knew.

42. Verily God doth know  
Of (every thing) whatever<sup>3468</sup>  
That they call upon  
Besides Him: and He is  
Exalted (in power), Wise.

43. And such are the Parables  
We set forth for mankind,  
But only those understand them  
Who have Knowledge.<sup>3469</sup>

44. God created the heavens  
And the earth in true  
(proportions):<sup>3470</sup>

20 Verily in that is a Sign

30 For those who believe.

يَسْتَأْذِنُ لَوْ أَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ  
كَيْفَ الْعَذَابُ كَيْفَ كَوْنُهُمْ كَيْفَ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ

مَا يَذْكُرُونَ مِنْ ذُنُوبِهِمْ مَنْ قَبْلِهِ  
وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

وَمَا يَعْزِلُهَا إِلَّا الْعَالَمُونَ  
وَمَا يَعْزِلُهَا إِلَّا الْعَالَمُونَ

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ  
إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

3466. The Spider's house is one of the wonderful Signs of God's creation. It is made up of fine silk threads spun out of silk glands in the spider's body. There are many kinds of spiders and many kinds of spider's houses. Two main types of houses may be mentioned. There is the tubular nest or web, a silk-lined house or burrow with one or two trap-doors. This may be called his residential or family mansion. Then there is what is ordinarily called a spider's web, consisting of a central point with radiating threads running in all directions and acting as tie-beams to the quasi-circular concentric threads that form the body of the web. This is his hunting box. The whole structure exemplifies economy in time, material, and strength. If an insect is caught in the net, the vibration set up in the radiating threads is at once communicated to the spider, who can come and kill his prey. In case the prey is powerful, the spider is furnished with poison glands with which to kill his prey. The spider sits either in the centre of the web or hides on the under-side of a leaf or in some crevice, but he always has a single thread connecting him with his web, to keep him in telephonic communication. The female spider is much bigger than the male, and in Arabic the generic gender of *'Ankabūt* is feminine.

3467. Most of the facts in the last note can be read into the Parable. For their thickness the spider's threads are very strong from the point of view of relativity, but in our actual world they are flimsy, especially the threads of the gossamer spider floating in the air. So is the house and strength of the man who relies on material resources however fine or beautiful relatively; before the eternal Reality they are as nothing. The spider's most cunning architecture cannot stand against a wave of a man's hand. His poison glands are like the hidden poison in our beautiful worldly plans, which may take various shapes but have seeds of death in them.

3468. The last verse told us that men, out of spiritual ignorance, build their hopes on flimsy unsubstantial things (like the spider's web) which are broken by a thousand chance attacks of wind and weather or the actions of animals or men. If they cannot fully grasp their own good, they should seek His Light. To Him everything is known,—men's frailty, their false hopes, their questionable motives, the false gods whom they enthrone in their midst, the mischief done by the neglect of Truth, and the way out for those who have entangled themselves in the snares of Evil. He is All-Wise and is able to carry out all He wills, and they should turn to Him.

3469. Parables seem simple things, but their profound meaning and application can only be understood by those who seek knowledge and by God's grace attain it.

3470. Cf. vi. 73 and n. 896. In all God's Creation, not only is there evidence of intelligent Purpose, fitting all parts together with wisdom, but also of supreme Goodness and cherishing Care, by which all needs are satisfied and all the highest and truest cravings fulfilled. These are like beckoning signals to lead on those who pray and search in Faith, those who with the intensest desire of their soul can pray, as in Cardinal Newman's Hymn, "Lead, kindly Light! Amid the encircling gloom, lead Thou me on!"





